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CREATING RELIGIOUS DANCE WITH CHILDREN
A CASE STUDY

by

©

Karen Anne Denis

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND
RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
FALL 1986

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled CREATING RELIGIOUS DANCE WITH CHILDREN: A CASE STUDY submitted by Karen Anne Denis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

Don Massey

Supervisor

J. L. Boorman

A. T. Craig

Date June 24/86

DEDICATED

TO MY FAMILY

GILLES, MICHELLE, AND DAVID

ABSTRACT

This study is the report of an experience in creating religious dance with children as it was lived by the researcher and a group of children. Creative dance experiences were built into religious celebration with grade five and six children and the responses of children, parents, and eductors were recorded and assessed.

The teaching process was carried out over a period of three months and all events were recorded in a daily diary by the researcher. The children also kept diaries as the study progressed. The study culminated in a celebration after which the participants as well as many of the observers were interviewed. Some of the interviews were informal discussions recorded in the researcher's field notes. Others were taped and later transcribed. Slides of ongoing events were taken and the celebration was videotaped.

The analysis of the material revealed a positive experience for all those involved. The children in this study experienced transition from the concrete to the spiritual in their journey of symbolic growth. Dance as a tool of teaching and learning in the context of celebration was very powerful.

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K.D.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The purpose of this study was to build creative dance experience into religious celebration with grade five and six children in a Catholic school system. The experience was then assessed in order to discover the dimensions of response to this approach by children, parents and educators.

Background to the Study

The researcher in the course of her professional duties had the opportunity to assist teachers in the area of creative dance. This task grew out of a physical education development and implementation project developed over a period of five years (1979 - 1984) within a Catholic school system and funded by the Department of Education. The purpose of the latter project was to develop a program based on the Alberta Physical Education Curriculum which was being revised ready for use in 1982. The researcher and other members of the project team then assisted teachers in the implementation of this program through demonstration lessons, workshops, and consultation.

At that time approximately twenty percent of the physical education curriculum was intended to be devoted to creative dance. A survey of the school system's physical education program one year prior to project initiation (1978) revealed that dance was not being taught at all. Teachers felt inadequate in the area of dance due to a lack of experience and training and some teachers felt that dance did not belong in physical education. Many cited the reason that "children did not like dance" as their explanation for not teaching it. This area became the most difficult area of the physical education program to implement. Resistance from teachers carried over to the children themselves especially at the upper elementary level. The resistance was the strongest in schools where the children had a very strong competitive games program. They felt creative dance was "weird", "babyish" and for "sissies" and besides floor hockey was more "fun"!

The project team experienced some success with dance when it was integrated with other subject areas and consequently Halloween became a favorite time to begin dance work. It was okay to be "weird" at Halloween! Dance was acceptable in the context of special days such as Halloween and Christmas. This tendency in both teachers and children to accept dance more readily on themes based on special days and seasons led to lesson plans being developed around these ideas.

A further problem in implementing a dance program was to provide teachers with music appropriate for a variety of creative dance situations. The project team found that if music was not readily available teachers did not teach dance. They did not have time or appeared disinclined to involve themselves in the search for music. One of the goals of the project team therefore was to provide materials for teachers and so encourage them to include dance in their programs. This led to a set of lesson plans developed around the existing music program. These lessons were well received by the teachers primarily because the music was readily available.

As a result of involvement in the five year project and a personal interest in the dance area the researcher began to think more and more about integrating dance into other subject areas. She had already experienced in her own teaching the integration of dance with science, language and art and subscribed to Eisner's (1978a) views about the importance of learning in many symbol systems.

> Human beings possess the capacity to contact and construe reality in a variety of ways. The sensory and symbol systems that humans have invented to express what they have come to know create different forms of awareness and make different modes of understanding possible. With our sensory systems, we experience various aspects of a multidimensional reality" (p.616).

There are many ways of knowing and many ways of expressing that knowledge. One can conceive an idea in one symbol system and express it in another. For example we can talk about the beauty of flowers in words, we can also express this same feeling through dance or visual art. This belief led the researcher to keep looking for possibilities for integrating dance into other areas.

The religious education curriculum in this Catholic school system includes a large selection of music readily available to the teachers. Dance is mentioned in the context of celebration in two instances in the grade six program (Chafe, 1979). The dances mentioned are very folk-like in style with imposed steps and gestures, but it is clear that there is a recognition that dance has a place in the program.

The dance form recommended in the physical education program is creative dance because of the potential in the form for expressive work.

> Instead of sets of standardised exercises, basic movement themes and their combinations and variations have proved to be the most helful tool for the teacher of the contemporary form of dance (Laban, 1948).

This form has the most potential for developing images, ideas, and feelings. Boorman (1982) states that

> ....the creative dance form has the broadest and deepest non-verbal system from which the child can make symbolic representation of his ideas, images and feelings. The broadest non-verbal symbol system relates to the number of visual and kinaesthetic symbols that are available to the child. The deepest non-verbal symbol system relates to the number of different meanings that each symbol can have for the child (p. 7).

For these reasons the researcher made the decision to use the creative dance form in her work with children in this study.

In looking at the literature on religious celebrations for children it was stated (Manternach, 1983; Murphy, 1980) that children need more concrete involvement in celebrations. This involvement had to be at their level and had to be multidimensional. "The collaboration of catechesis and the arts and media deserves close attention and encouragement" (Manternach, 1983, p.19). Children need pictures, stories, music, drama, and art. It appeared therefore to the researcher that creative dance was an ideal way of involving children more fully in religious celebration. Murphy (1980) states that

> It may be very helpful for the teacher catechist to think about the use of movement as means of human expression, a way to express significant points in our lives, to celebrate, to take a stand, to communicate a belief, to hold up a value or declare a human right (p. 9).

Creative dance has the potential to provide a way of developing human expression and communicating beliefs and ideas.

Even though there is support for dance in the religious education literature the researcher found some evidence of controversy. Responding to an article that referred to dance as being less than 'pure', Weyman (1982) is called upon to defend dance in the context of celebration.

> ...my experience has been that when dance is presented in a beautiful and dignified manner, truly as prayer, it enhances the spirituality of those who worship and brings them closer to the Lord. Not only dancers but also the people in the pews participate in the richness of this art form (p.12).

This controversy, combined with the resistance to dance at the upper elementary level, led the researcher to decide that before developing teacher resources in this area some experimentation needed to take place. The idea needed to be tried out with a group of students and the responses of both students and adults (teachers and parents) assessed.

Design of the Study

According to Stenhouse (1975, pp. 4-5) curriculum starts out as an imagined possibility. This possibility then becomes the subject of limited experimentation or trial. This study is about such an experience, the integration of creative dance into celebration with one class of grade five and six children in a Catholic school system.

The content of this study suggested that the methods of design and implementation must be qualitative. It was important to find out how the children felt about their involvement through movement, in religious celebration. It was also important to discover the responses of the adults involved with the children. If either group were negative it would be difficult for the children to have a meaningful experience. According to Filstead (1979),

> ...the qualitative paradigm perceives social life as the shared creativity of individuals. It is this sharedness which produces a reality perceived to be objective, extant, and knowable to all participants in social interaction" (p. 35).

This particular study was based on the idea of a shared creativity between teachers and students.

The religion program discusses faith this way: "The child's faith is not better than the adult's or vice versa; ours is a common faith, expressed according to the uniqueness and creativity of each individual" (Chafe, 1979, p. viii). The learning experience must allow for the uniqueness of the children and the teacher. The responses of both the children and the adults were important as they participated in this experience.

Although the researcher does not claim to be doing ethnography the techniques of ethnographic fieldwork were used extensively in this study. Wilson (1977) in discussing the rationale for ethnographic fieldwork states:

> Ethnographic techniques are part of a research technique that has been developed by anthropologists and community-study sociologists. These methods have been found to be useful for gathering certain important kinds of data; in fact, some researchers claim that these anthropological techniques may gather information about human behaviour that it is impossible to obtain by the more quantitative methods (p.246).

It was important to explore the point of view of the children and adults in this experience. As explained by Spradley and McCurdy (1972): "This is a radical change in the way many scientists see their work. Instead of asking, 'What do I see these people doing?' we must ask, 'What do these people see themselves doing?'" (p.9). How did the participants in this dance celebration see the experience?

Procedures

The following procedures took place over a period of four months which included a two week pilot study in mid-December (1983) and the research from mid-February (1984) to mid-May (1984), in a classroom of grade five and six children in a Catholic school system.

Spindler (1982) calls attention to the fact that ethnographic enquiry proceeds through stages which follow one another as well as overlap. The first stage he refers to as "reconnaissance" (p.238) which is a gathering of relevant background information and related literature. In this research stage one included the background literature as well as preliminary interviews of the children and adults in the setting.

Stage two in an ethnography deals with the intense field observations and "decisions that some things are more important than others are made, to be sure, as a product of what one knows from stage one interacting with what one finds out is actually there where the research is to be done in stage two" (p.238). In this research stage two was the development of the dances which included five steps.

1) The dances were developed, drawing upon the knowledge of experienced teachers in the field of creative dance (staff from the University of Alberta's Children's Creative Dance Theatre). They were designed according to their appropriateness for grade five and six children. Input from the children and their own interpretation of movements were always a part of the final design of the dances.

2) The dances were taught by the researcher. The other activities related to celebration (art, written work, music) were team taught by the researcher and the cooperating teacher.

3) Four dances were developed and three of these were used in a celebration.

4) The celebration was planned together with the cooperating teacher, the children, and the researcher. This stage differed from ethnography in that the environment being studied was set up by the researcher. According to Philips (in Spindler 1982) one of the characteristics of ethnography is the "concern to avoid altering or disrupting the social system being studied, particularly while the study is going on" (p.200). This is

the opposite of the intent of this research which is to change the environment (through the incorporation of dance in celebration) and monitor the response to this change.

Spindler's third stage deals with the collection of data and the various kinds of analytic schemes used to collect and analyze the data. Wilson (1977) in discussing the ethnographic approach to data collection states:

> This kind of anthropological inquiry seeks to discover the meaning structures of the participants in whatever forms they are expressed. Hence, this research is multimodal, (p.255).

Wilcox (in Spindler 1982) notes that data collection depends upon each situation.

> Traditionally, from the ethnographer's point of view, the gathering of many different kinds of data has been seen to increase the validity and reliability of the study, and the uniqueness of each setting and each area of study has been thought to require a tailormade set of methods and techniques (p.460).

Data collection in this research included the following multimodal approach:

1) A journal was kept by the researcher and verified by the cooperating teacher, recording all events and discussions. Journals were also kept by the grade five and six children. Wolcott (1975) suggests that the keeping of a journal helps to make the researcher's feelings and attitudes clear as ideas are put down as they are seen and felt. This applied to both the researcher and the children. The children's journals also allowed the

researcher to communicate with them on a regular basis as she responded to their ideas and feelings.

2) Extensive discussions were conducted with groups of children, the cooperating teacher, the principal, the supervisor of elementary education, and the religion consultant. These were all recorded.

3) Spontaneous conversations with some parents, children and teachers were recorded in the journal.

The assessment of the responses to the study was qualitatively based on feedback from the participants both performers and spectators. In order to evaluate something that involves the whole individual one needs a method that is 'holistic'. Eisner (1978) dealt with this idea when he said:

> We also need to use symbol systems that are employed in film, that use teacher logs and student interviews, and that employ graphic visual analysis of the work students create. We need slides of classroom activity and photos of work in progress. In short, we need to use an approach to educational evaluation that capitalizes on our human capacity to come to know reality in its multidimensional richness (p. 622).

The data gathering techniques (audio taping, video taping, photographs, slides, and children's written work) used in this study provide the multidimensional richness. The views of all those involved in the study brought understanding of the quality and depth of the experience.

Research Questions

In doing fieldwork both formal and informal interviewing techniques are used. According to Wolcott (in Jaeger 1980) informal interviews are probably more important. Wilcox (in Spindler 1982) suggests the importance of open ended questions. "Interviews vary from completely informal encounters to highly structured sessions, although the questions are almost always quite open-ended" (p.461). Keeping this in mind the following questions served as a guide to the researcher in gathering data through interviews and observation:

1) What are children's understandings of religious celebration? How do they feel about it? Is it meaningful to them from their point of view?

2) How did the adults involved in the celebration view the experience for themselves and for the children. Did they see it as a meaningful experience for the children?

3) Was the response to the inclusion of dance in celebration positive or negative or both? What aspects elicited positive responses/negative responses?

4) Did the inclusion of dance further the understandings of religious concepts?

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in this study was that of participant observer. The researcher assumed the role of both teacher and researcher. Wolcott (1980) states that "participant observation requires a delicate balance between the roles of participant and observer, and a clear understanding of the involvement of the researcher in those roles" (p.F-3). Although this dual role was at times difficult it deepened the insights gained by the researcher as she became totally involved along with the children in the creative process of developing a celebration.

Description of Terms

For the purposes of this study the following description of terms was used:

Dance - Whenever dance is referred to in this study in the context of children it will mean the creative dance form. Creative dance is a form that is based on Rudolph Laban's analysis of human movement and has been adapted to education. It is the dance form recommended by Alberta Education for work with children. (1969)

Liturgy, Worship, Celebration - The terms liturgy, worship, and celebration will be used interchangeably to mean "a stylized way of saying that a certain value is important and of trying to make it more real in our lives" (Larose, p.13.1981). Formal worship will refer to that which takes place in a church context.

Theme - A theme will mean the idea or value that is being celebrated. Examples could be peace or friendship.

Educators - This term will include teachers, consultants, and supervisors.

Organization of the Study

The organization of this study reflects the development of the ideas as they unfolded in the context of the classroom.

In chapter two a rationale for bringing together aspects of two distinct curriculums is developed from two perspectives. The first one deals with the way religious celebration is enhanced through dance. The second perspective deals with the role dance can play in making religious celebration more meaningful for children.

Chapter three deals with the preliminary work that had to be done in order to become familiar with the children and the setting. A sense of familiarity and trust between the researcher and the children, cooperating teacher and the school had to be developed.

The complete teaching process is dealt with in chapter four. An integrative approach, with input from the children and the cooperative teacher, was developed over a period of time. A record was kept of the responses to the project and these are also included.

Chapter five is a description of the celebration itself along with the tense, exciting days preceding it. Also included are the responses of the children, parents and educators to the celebration.

Finally, chapter six discusses the conclusions of the researcher as well as reflects on the methodology used in the study.

Limitations of the Study

Inherent in this study were the particular biases, attitudes and assumptions of the researcher, cooperating teacher and students. Therefore this study is not generalizable beyond this particular group and it will not be possible to replicate this study. However, if this experience is positive for these children it is probable that it will be positive for other children of this age in similar settings.

Significance of the Study

It is hoped that this study provides some insight into the meaning of religious celebration for children. This study may provide data that would indicate that, both from the point of view of children and adults, dance should be included more extensively in religious curriculum.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LETERATURE

Introduction

The idea of religious dance has an extensive history.

> Dance became the vehicle or language for primitive man's religious expression. He imitated the movement of life in nature. For him, movement indicated an indwelling spirit. He searched for harmony with the world around him. Where or when that harmony did not exist, he drew upon the power and energy of the dance to change or appease the threatening forces (Ortegel, 1976, p. 5).

Gradually throughout the centuries, as Christian religions developed and divisions ocurred between the secular and the church, dance came to be seen in many instances as a pagan custom. Since Vatican II (1965) there has been a move to return to religious dance. In both Canada and the United States groups of people are working towards its development and acceptance. (See Ortegel, 1976). The Sacred Dance Guild (Beverly, Mass.) which was founded in 1958 exists to offer leadership in a variety of dance forms and religious denominations.

> Running, skipping, twirling, kneeling - movement is a natural way to express one's deepest feelings, a means of responding to God and His creation. In the church, expressive movement, or liturgical dance, is finding its place in worship along with music, art, and drama. (Litherland, 1979, p.33).

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a rationale for incorporating dance into religious celebration with children by demonstrating that it can make an important contribution to religious celebration. According to Bruce (1966) religious celebration should be an "exploration of experience, the deepening of feeling and the extension of the horizons of his human situation" (p.x).

The researcher worked from two premises in this study. First of all that religious celebration can be made more powerful through inclusion of the arts and more specifically dance, and secondly that the meaning of celebration for children can be enhanced through dance. Part One of this chapter deals with the arts (including dance) in religious celebration and Part Two deals with the meaning of dance in religious celebration for children.

Part One - Religious Celebration

The Arts Dimension

Inherent in celebration is the possibility for religious experience. Westerhoff (1979) defines religious experience as "the need to express creatively and socially the wholeness of life (p.17). Pruyser (1979) sees the religious experience as involving perceptual processes, thought organization, linguistic functions, emotional processes, the motor system, and relations to persons, things, ideas and self. It is a complex experience with both cognitive and affective aspects.

There is a concern in recent years over the loss of the affective aspects of the religious experience. It is important to have a balance between the appeal to the intellect and the appeal to the emotions. "The rational has tended to become the heart of the religious expression and the aesthetic has been relegated to an inferior status in religious circles" (Thompson, 1979, p. 31). Any religious experience must, if it shall remain satisfying to human beings, include in balance both the cognitive and affective aspects.

Westerhoff (1979) discusses the affective aspect in this way.

> For too long we have been living in the prosaic world of surface reality. We need to affirm the poetic truth of metaphor and myth by questioning the basic premise of the naturalistic universe and social science's search for clear explanations. Perhaps the true explanations of life are beyond concepts, to be reached only through the intuition (p.21).

Westerhoff holds the common view that the arts cannot be discussed rationally and places them in the realm of the mystic. This view has been disputed in recent years.

Martin (1965) holds the view that the arts allow us to know in a way that cannot be expressed in any other way. This knowledge is based on nonverbal symbolic systems not just simply intuition. The arts are a means of communicating when words are inadequate.

> Common usage acknowledges in a number of popular phrases the existence of such a verbal inadequacy, as when we say that something "beggars description" or "must be seen to be appreciated" or is "too beautiful for words." It is in this category of things and experiences too beautiful for words - or too ugly or too intensive in some direction - that the artist finds his material and justifies his art as a medium of use to society" (Martin, 1965, p.13).

The arts are a way of knowing and utilizing symbols that are non-verbal. Each art whether it is painting, music, mime or dance has its own unique system of symbols that adds another dimension to the understanding of life experience. The arts like other disciplines are basically about knowledge. "... that is, they are languages of comprehension, of thinking, of knowing, of receiving, and of expressing information" (Engel, 1978, p. 24). Eisner (1981) supports this view when he states that "the arts are cognitive activities, guided by human intelligence, that make unique forms of meaning possible" (p.48). For Eisner the arts provide the essential resources for education. All concepts are sensory in character and these sensory impressions can be represented in many ways. Each discipline has a different way of representing these conceptualizations.

> The kind of information that we are able to convey about what we have conceptualized is both constrained and made possible by the forms of representation that we have access to and are able to use. The same holds true for portrayals of classrooms, teaching, love affairs, and memorable cities one has visited (Eisner 1981, p.50).

In order to experience art one must have a knowledge of art. "In particular art has the power to represent reality and to express emotion, and it is in understanding these specifically artistic properties that we come to appreciate art"(p.168) There is more to knowing than the manipulation of words. To offer children only one kind of knowledge is to limit their intellectual growth. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1978) "rational and artistic cognition are therefore complimentary approaches in that they provide knowledge about different dimensions of reality that would be inaccessible to each approach by itself" (in Madeja, P.126). Thompson (1980) emphasizes this idea by citing the example of Albert Einstein.

> He was asked one day to describe the theory of relativity in simple words, so the questioner might catch at least a glimpse of its meaning. Einstein responded, 'I cannot do what you request. But if you will call on me at Princeton, I will play it for you on my violin' (p.44).

This example emphasizes the point that all experiences do not need to be verbalized and understanding can come through feelings. Through the arts this dimension can be added to religious development.

Feelings and the arts have been closely associated. Best (1974) claims that many feelings can only be experienced by those with certain abilities.

> Understanding art is not simply a matter of "natural", unlearned feeling as is so often thought by those who accept without question the supposed

> antitheses between emotion and reason. Whole areas of feeling will remain unknown to those who have not learned to appreciate the arts (p.176).

H'Doubler (1940) presents a similar view when talking about the audience today who expects to see dance only as entertainment. "They have not had the opportunity to study movement as a medium of expression. Therefore, the most advanced forms of art dance are likely to be meaningless to them" (p.37). Art and the feelings associated with them are forms of knowledge that must be learned.

Emotion in order to be expressed must be in some form. In dance, movement provides the form. Through dance one can explore and deepen the insight into emotion. According to Best (1974) one can do this even without feeling the emotion at the time (p.187). This would be impossible if what was expressed was totally out of the realm of human feeling. The arts deal with life experiences.

Aesthetic experience and religious experience have parallels. "Both are concerned with the creation and discovery of beauty, with the communication of deeper meanings, with the transformation of the vision in which we behold the world" (Padavano, 1979, p.4). Part of the purpose of religion is to make life beautiful. It is a search for the deeper meaning of life. The arts provide a way of doing this through their appeal to the total person. "Art becomes a religious experience when it seeks and affirms, communicates and celebrates, makes possible and indeed inescapable the experiences we are describing. Art and religion fail if they do not bring beauty into life" (Padavano, 1979, p.5). The way we look at the world determines the way we do things. Both art and religion are more effective when they deal with life experiences. They show us things we have seen before. When art raises, consciously or subconsciously, such questions as "Who am I?" "Why am I here?" and "Where am I going?" it is asking religious questions.

For Tobey (1979) the totality of the worshipping environment can provide the occasion for aesthetic experience within the religious dimension.

> In a sense, then, human minds put together all the perceptions of the situation-crosses and crucifixes, statues and walls, mosaics and ikons, hymns, dances, music, sermons, anthems, and a myriad of other forms, shapes, colors, and sounds-and combine them with their own training and experience. They respond to this total environment, and sometimes they respond aesthetically; that is, they interpret it as an experience of harmony and beauty, and they may couple it with some sense of the Beyond, with a spirit superior to the human spirit, or a sense of the ultimate. When this occurs, the aesthetic experience is also a religious experience (p.38).

For Weyman (1982) the aesthetic dimension permits an experience of 'oneness' with one or more elements of a celebration. She discusses the levels of participation in this way. "Surely all of us have had the experience of feeling as 'one' with the choirmaster or with the organist on hearing Bach's mass in B minor, or of being 'one with the sculptor on viewing Michaelangelo's Pieta" (p.12). The dance performance then can be equally involving for the spectator.

The Dance Dimension

The language of dance is a symbolic representation of ideas, images and feelings. Dance provides an avenue for translating life experiences. Boorman writes "that there are meanings that a child can convey and receive only through dance. There are ideas, images and feelings that can be expressed and communicated in dance that cannot be rendered in verbal language, be it spoken or written, music, the visual arts, or any other idiom" (Boorman, 1981, p.3,4).

Everything that has been said about dance as an expressive art, applies to the understanding of dance within a religious context. The communicative powers of dance can express the feelings, ideas and images associated with religious experience. Strickland (1984) talks about the power of dance as prayer. "To pray sacramentally is to dance. This can be a significant step in our return to the Hebrew roots of knowing God: to dance is to acknowledge God through action" (p. 20).

Dance can add a powerful visual dimension to religious expression. Ortegel (1976) makes a strong claim for this when she says that dance ..."appeals to the sense of sight, and the sense of sight is a very strong sense. We retain longer what we see than what we hear. Consequently, what you do in your dance is going to make an impression" (p. 54).

Part Two - How the Meaning of Religious Celebration for Children is Enhanced Through Dance

As with most activities in which adults are engaged, it is important to translate these activities into a form that is consistent with the children's level of understanding. Aesthetic growth is a gradual process. It is fostered through an education of the senses. This education of the senses comes essentially through the non-verbal activities. This becomes important in any work done with children. Rose Hill (1978) claims that the development and education of aesthetic experience is an important aim of the creative dance teacher.

> I am presenting the further claim for your consideration that creative dance offers a superb medium for the development of aesthetic sensitivity and appreciation (p.71).

According to Larose (1981) in his writings on liturgy with children:

> ...it is not enough to know the principles of good liturgy - all the theological background, historical profundity, and familiarity with documents in the world will not help if you are not familiar with children and comfortable working with them. The basic principles of child-work apply whether you are a teacher, den mother, scout master, baby-sitter, parent or liturgist...(p. 7).

Larose discusses four areas that are important in celebrations with children: emotional needs , sense experiences, participation, and structure. Emotionally children need what Larose calls the three A words ; "Approval, Attention, and Affection." People working with children in preparing and participating in celebration must provide for these needs in order to obtain a maximum involvement from children.

Sense experiences form the basis of the way in which children learn. "Children appreciate the non-verbal: the symbolic, the sensory, actions and gestures. Liturgy should take care to heighten, rather than downplay, its non-verbal elements for children" (Larose,p.9, 1981). Children do not make very good spectators. Therefore the more involved they can be intellectually, emotionally, and physically, the better the chances of them understanding and participating fully in the celebration. According to Russell (1975)

> The particular nature of the art of movement lies in the fact that all the aspects of the personality are brought into play - body, spirit, intellect, emotions - although certain individuals will stress different ones (p.89).

Redfern (1973) discusses the importance of the non-verbal experience for extending a child's knowledge and experience.

> Thus the imaginings of young or inarticulate children, which do not always readily find expression in words (even though they are capable of verbal translations), are often manifest in movement. Furthermore, the act of giving public utterance to their ideas and attitudes through non-verbal means may not only crystallise and reinforce what they know, but also provide insight for those who watch, both into the apparently familiar, and into the individual himself and the way in which he apprehends (which includes feeling as well as thinking about the world) (p.13).

According to H'Doubler (1940) "the inclusion of dance in the general education program is the one means of giving free opportunity to every child for experiencing the contributions it can make to his developing personality and his growing artistic nature" (p.59). One cannot ignore the place of dance in maximizing the potential development of an individual. Fowler (1977) echoes this view when he says "because dance involves the entire body mechanism with its attendant intellectual, emotional, and physical functions, it provides an ideal means to attain self-awareness, self-development, and self-fulfillment" (p.4). This makes it basic to education.

Dance provides children with another symbolic coding process that can relate to other areas of the curriculum. It provides a holistic approach to education by dealing with the physical as well as the intellectual and emotional. For Martin (1979), "dance as a basic educator, along the lines of a theory that treats the individual as an integer, is obviously unique, for no other activity calls into play the three departments of the personality with such equality of emphasis and especially such unity of impulse" (p.290). It is this integration that gives dance such powerful potential for teaching and learning.

Creative dance by its very form offers a broad scope for developing the symbolic, the sensory, the actions and gestures. Of all dance forms, creative dance offers the most scope for children to express and communicate their ideas.

> It is my current belief that the creative dance form, compared to all other dance forms, is the vehicle that has the greatest potential for the provision of symbolic representation in children's dance. This belief is based initially upon two significant facts. One, that it is conceptually based. The framework of movement concepts, which were formulated by Laban, provide a secure but open scaffold upon which we construct the children's dance experience (Boorman, 1982, p.7).

It is this "open scaffold" in the creative dance form that will allow the building of experiences for children in celebration that deal with the symbolic and the sensory. Hill (1979) presents a similar view in her writings on aesthetic development.

> ...my readings in aesthetics have reinforced my belief that the creative dance form, with the freedom it permits the child in developing movement patterns

> and the opportunities it provides for him to select his own movements to depict his imagery and to learn the language to describe it, together with opportunities for developing a critical faculty by observing other children's dance, appears most likely to provide experiences recommended by experts in children's aesthetic education (p.65).

Tobey (1979) suggests providing a wide variety of experiences in religious celebration, involving the whole person. The student brings the whole self to both the religious experience and the dance experience. What the children bring can change the situation. In religious education, experiences of touching, tasting, smelling, seeing, hearing, are often promoted for young children, but from the time children start school there is a marked shift to mental experiences-hearing, reading, thinking, analyzing, writing (p.43). Dance provides a way of enriching the sensory experiences for children. According to Hawkins (1965)

> The dancer needs experiences in three major areas of development, which include (1) awareness of sensory data and ability to experience fully; (2) ability to use aesthetic elements of dance in relation to a specific motivation; and (3) competence in making aesthetic judgements in the process of composing so that the result is aesthetically satisfying (p.34).

These three areas of development are structured throughout the total dance experience. Religious celebration can provide the motivation for the sensory experience. The composition with all elements of dance working together provide a total experience.

Religious education is an exploration of ideas and feelings about life. These ideas and feelings can be explored through dance. This nonverbal expression can lead to all kinds of relevant discussion encountered in concrete form. This study is concerned with the heightening of the non-verbal elements of celebration through the incorporation of movement. Movement can be developed based on ideas, images, and feelings that come from the child's life experiences. The potential for making liturgical dance meaningful for children is inherent in the creative dance form.

CHAPTER THREE

PRELIMINARY WORK

Introduction

The preliminary research consisted of two parts. In the first part two dances were planned which would be incorporated into a religious celebration built around the Christmas theme. Through the teaching of this unit entry was gained into a classroom where I thought I might be able to work. The second part set the stage for the research by introducing the idea of the religious celebration to the children. I became more familiar with the setting, and through a series of interviews (the children, the principal of the school and the parish priest) gained some insight into the understandings and feelings regarding religious celebration for children.

The first part took place the four weeks prior to Christmas in 1983. The second part started in February of 1984 and took me into stage two of the research.

Part One - Preparing the Unit, Choosing The Sample and Gaining Entry

Preparing the Unit

While attending the University of Alberta Children's Dance Theatre Christmas concert in 1982 I observed several dances that I felt could be adapted to a religious celebration. I obtained permission to go in and observe the children preparing for their 1983 Christmas concert and it was there that I picked up my ideas for the preliminary work with my sample class. I chose to use the music 'Joy to the World' and 'Drummer Boy' as I felt that two dances would be enough to find out if I could work with this group of children in the dance area.

Choosing the Sample

In choosing a group of children to work with there were three major considerations. First of all, because of the integrative nature of my study and the length of time I would be spending in the classroom, I felt that it was important to choose a teacher with whom I could work closely as this project required team teaching. Another consideration was the response of the principal to the idea of dance in religious celebration. I felt that if the principal was negative toward the idea it could adversely affect the children's attitude. The third consideration was the attitude of the children. If they had a negative attitude toward dance I would not want to attempt this type of study. I was fortunate not to encounter any negative attitudes.

I chose to work in the classroom of a friend and colleague and she agreed. Doreen and I had worked closely together for three years on the physical education implementation project and had always worked well together. It was her first year back in a regular classroom after many years of working as a consultant exclusively in the field of physical education. We felt we could offer support to each other.

Doreen approached the principal of the school (Al) regarding this project. He happened to have a very personal interest in religious celebration and had been doing the planning of the school celebrations himself. Al was open to new ideas in this area and was quite excited about having this project done in his school.

Because of the short time that Doreen had worked with these children, their lack of dance experience in previous grades, and their age, we were concerned about the children's reaction to creative dance. In our previous work in the field both Doreen and I had found this a difficult age at which to introduce a dance program for the first time. Doreen had done a short folk dance unit with the children and was not happy with the quality of the movement. She felt however that most of the children had enjoyed it with the exception of a few boys. These boys had to be coaxed into anything that was new to them. We decided there was only one way to find out and that was to try it.

Gaining Entry

Wilson (1977) states that "the ethnographer is sensitive to the way he enters a setting and carefully establishes a role that facilitates the collection of information" (p.254). In order to facilitate the creative process and to collect accurate data it was important in this study to build a sense of trust with the children. Although it is more common in ethnography to attempt to establish a neutral position with no special alliance to any one faction in the field (Hawke 1980) I chose instead to align myself closely with Doreen in order to establish my role as teacher. My role as researcher was established later.

Doreen and I decided that I should be introduced as a friend who was coming in to help with their Christmas celebration. Doreen had developed a good rapport with her children and we felt that her accepting attitude toward the study and the researcher would carry over to them. We explained that a celebration would be developed using new ideas. I became a part of the class, coming in every day and working with Doreen and the children until the day of the celebration, one day before the start of Christmas holidays.

The starting point for the growth of the dances within the context of a Christmas celebration was the Christmas unit in the religion program (Chafe, 1979). As suggested in the program the children became Kristkindls to one another. Kristkindl represents the spirit of giving. Students wrote their names on a slip of paper and placed them in a container. Everyone drew a name and from then until Christmas they were to become Kristkindl to that person doing nice things for them without revealing their identity. They would also buy a gift for that person which would be exchanged on the day of the celebration. In a discussion on symbolism we talked about the symbols of Christmas (lights, trees, gifts, etc.). Using the idea of the symbolism of Kristkindl as the spirit of giving, we developed the dance to the music of 'Drummer Boy'. During this dance, using slow walking actions, changes in direction and changes in levels, the children presented their gifts to one another.

For our second dance we worked with the idea of the joy that that was brought to the world through Jesus' birth. For this dance we used the music 'Joy to the World'. This was an 'up tempo' dance using lively skips and spins with the children in three large groups. Much to my surprise the children chose their own group shapes and starting positions for this dance. We did the dance in rounds with each group starting at a different time and all three finishing together. All the boys chose to work in one group and I agreed as long as they worked well. During the whole time I worked on this celebration I had to bench two boys for silliness once. The rest of the time the children worked very well.

Once we had learned the dances we started to plan the actual celebration. Groups of students were chosen to do various things. Some prepared readings related to our theme of giving and joy, others wrote the prayers, two prepared the narration and everyone worked on decorations for the gym where we were holding the celebration.

For the celebration Doreen and I decided to invite the assistant principal and the grade two classroom with their teacher. We felt that this sharing would make the celebration more meaningful. We chose the grade two class because their teacher had involved them with several dance experiences and we felt they would enjoy what the children were doing. For the most part they were passive participants not being actively involved in the readings and the dances. At the end of the celebration we had the grade two class join the three groups and we did the 'Joy to the World' dance again. It was great fun! Dancing with the younger children added a sense of sharing and joy to our celebration. One of our boys who became shy about being observed chose not to dance and took care of the music for us.

Feedback/Evaluation

The assistant principal, who had not been involved in the process came to our final celebration as the principal was away that day. He had never seen anything like that before and thought it was "very interesting and different". He commented on the excellent integration (movement, music, religion) and suggested that we write lesson plans for the complete celebration so that other teachers could use them. Having done a little bit of dance with his students and finding they responded well he indicated an interest in doing more with them in the context of celebration. I asked if he saw the possibility of doing this kind of dance in the context of more formal celebration (the Mass) and he was quite excited about it.

The grade two teacher valued the experience and would like her children to be involved again. She felt they enjoyed it very much. The dance to 'Drummer Boy' affected her emotionally giving her 'goose bumps'.

Conclusions

I felt that I had now gained entry into the classroom. Doreen and I were satisfied that the children had accepted me and that we would be able to work with them in the area of dance and celebration. We made plans for continuing after Christmas.

Part Two - Setting the Stage For the Research

Introducing the Research

The time had come to establish my role as researcher. I decided to introduce the idea of educational research to the children through a brief discussion about the origin of curriculum. A few of the children thought that the teachers made up the curriculum. I explained to them that the curriculum they study is mandated by the Provincial Government. Individual school boards then develop programs based on this curriculum. This particular Catholic school system has adopted a Canadian program for Religious Education, a part of which is religious celebration. I explained that before curriculum is developed there is usually some research done related to it. My research would be an experiment to look at some new ways of doing religious celebration with children and I would be interested in finding out their feelings toward religious celebration. The importance of honesty in research was discussed. One of the boys described an incident where he and his friend falsified research by riding their bikes back and forth over the traffic counters. I emphasized to them the importance of being honest with me about their feelings as we worked through the study. At this time there was no specific discussion about dance but one of the girls asked if we were going to do some more dance and

I replied yes. I took the fact that no one groaned as a positive sign. I explained that I would be working with them in the gymnasium just as we did at Christmas as well as interviewing them and asking many questions. When Doreen told them we were not going to use their scheduled physical education time and they would be in the gymnasium much more than usual they were very pleased.

Getting Reacquainted

The first month of my time in the school was spent just reacquainting myself with the situation. The children spent the first half hour of every day in the gymnasium having physical education. During this time I talked with the children informally and observed them a great deal. I tried to become part of the class by taking part sometimes in their activities as well as helping out with small groups. A week and a half after starting I realised I only knew boys names because they were involved in any disruptions there were in class. This led me to go back and look specifically at the writing about working with boys in creative dance.

According to Carroll (1969) "there is , in fact, no difference between the movement experience that is valuable for boys and that which is valuable for girls. The principles of movement formulated by Laban are principles of human movement" (p.9). We do not distinguish between boys' and girls' music or between boys' and girls' poetry. It does not make sense to distinguish between boys' and girls' dance. Carroll suggests however that due to different physiological make-up as well as social conditioning there are different answers to the same problem.

> The potential for response in dance is within all of us, and can be seen in the spontaneous movement of young children, but, because of inhibitions imposed by our particular social conditioning, the initial motivation to dance in school must be provided by the teachers. However, the dance or physical education teacher must believe in and must adopt an approach that demonstrates the relevance of dance to the contemporary situation, and to the interests and problems and aspirations of individual boys (p.11).

Generally it is considered that strong, energetic movement is more masculine (Carroll 1969, Ririe 1981). The recognition that dance is strenuous and physically demanding helps to gain interest and respect. They do not subscribe to the view that only powerful movement is masculine but make use of this attitude to get boys started. The use of dance drama can provide a way of arousing interest in expressive movememt. Current issues and ideas relevant to what is happening in the classroom at the time provide the best themes for use with dance. Here again Carroll (1969) stresses the energetic and strenuous to get started.

Both Carroll (1969) and Ririe (1981) suggest the use of music with a dynamic stress.

> In the early stages of introducing dance, it is important to choose short pieces of music or short extracts from longer works in order that a reasonable standard of movement mastery is achieved. Repetition within pieces is also very useful and helps to consolidate movement expression (Carroll, p.22).

Ririe indicates that boys seem to like percussive rhythms, architectural structures built with their bodies and vigorous locomotor patterns. Popular music can be a good starting point for beginning dance. It serves to bring something familiar to an unfamiliar activity. A steady diet of this kind of music however, would severely limit the movement possibilities.

The initial participation of the teacher is important for encouraging the reluctant children. Coaching also becomes very important to provide reinforcement and feedback. "It is the teacher's skill as an enabler which will ensure progression" (Carroll, 1969, p.70). Ririe (1981) thinks it helps to have a male model, either a male teacher or an example of a good male dancer.

My own feeling is that we must keep working on the social attitudes towards male dancing. This view is supported by King (1981) who believes that:

> dance is masculine when it is done by males who are not inhibited by preconceptions of what dance 'should be' or what men 'should do'. When parents and educators are convinced of this, dance will be accepted as appropriate for boys in the way music and the visual arts are (p.54).

King's own experience taught him that boys in an audience were just as enthusiastic as girls. The boys were highly influenced by the attitude of the adult spectators.

As a result of this reading I decided to go with the approach that a positive attitude on the part of Doreen and me, and Al's enthusiasm would be sufficient to keep the boys involved. Break dance was becoming popular at this time and was a motivation to the boys. A few of our boys were attempting it and we were able to encourage them as well as expand their repertoire of actions.

Starting Diaries

I decided to have the children start a diary for several reasons. First of all, Doreen had mentioned that her children needed to do a lot more writing as they were very weak in this area. The diary would give them an opportunity to write on a regular basis in a non-threatening way as it would be private and not evaluated. Secondly, it provided an opportunity to keep track of their feelings as we worked through the project. I found there wasn't enough time to talk to them regularly any other way. Thirdly, it was an opportunity to provide encouragement and positive feedback to each child as I responded to them by writing in their diaries every day. Fourthly, it provided the children with a means of input into the project. They could write their ideas and suggestions down in their diaries and I could reply back in writing or personally. They started their diaries by writing down their ideas about the research we were involved in and also any thoughts they had about the Christmas Celebration. From their initial writing I discovered that they had enjoyed working with the grade two class. The possibility of using the grade two class in the research began to grow at this point.

Initial Interviews

The purpose of the initial interviews was to become familiar with the feelings toward religious celebrations in this particular school. In order to do this I interviewed the principal, the children, and one of the priests associated with the school.

The Principal (February 29)

I interviewed the principal for his views on religious celebration and to discover how celebration was handled in his school at the present time. I also needed to know if there were guidelines as well as strong feelings about anything that would possibly affect what I was attempting with the children.

Al feels that religious celebrations are an important component in the religious program in the Catholic schools. His concept of what constitutes religious celebration is broad and varied. "Anytime we get together, in a sense, it's a celebration" (p.2). Some celebrations include a Mass, while other celebrations center around a theme such as Remembrance Day or Valentine's Day. Al feels it is easier to make a celebration more meaningful to children if it does not include the Mass because you have the flexibility to incorporate more ideas. Every year they have a Western Days celebration. "It's joyous. It's sharing. It's getting along. It's all these things. That's an action celebration. You don't need to have the Bible out for a celebration, you know" (P.25).

Al sees celebrations as a way of encouraging community participation and relationships. For example the staff cooks pancakes for the whole school on Shrove Tuesday. They have the neighboring public school over for a Thanksgiving dinner. The public school has them over for a Christmas dinner.

> I think that when our children at our school see that we have fun together as adults too, like we do enjoy each other on the staff, we work hard, but we also play hard, when our children see that, and our parent community, we've done all the PR work we need to do. Right there. Celebration is an area where we can do a lot (p.26).

Leadership is essential in doing good celebrations. There should be an adult overseeing the celebrations but there should also be a lot of child planning and participation in celebrations. Traditionally in this school children have participated in the usual ways: doing some of the readings, bringing up the gifts, and singing the songs. Gradually over the years they have been expanding the kinds of activities done in celebrations. Such things as choral readings, part readings, dramatization, and the use of props have helped to make the concepts clearer. These props have included beach balls to represent summer and candles to represent the light of Christ.

> I mean, I've been doing this for 15 years, and I change every year and new ideas come in and another teacher brings in a new idea and we have to capitalize on it. Share the ideas around (p.31).

Al feels that as a leader it is his job to try to bring out new ideas from the staff, allow them the freedom to experiment, and give them encouragement. This is how growth continues in a school.

Good celebrations require preparation. Some celebrations need more preparation than others depending on the formality required. Sometimes celebrations happen within the classroom spontaneously and grow out of the immediate experience of the children. Other times they are based on a theme and various people prepare different parts. Whatever the celebration, it is important for the children to understand the purpose. This does not mean a lot of rehearsal. If there is too much rehearsal it takes the element of excitement, freshness, and surprise out of it.

In discussing dance with Al he stated that he had never seen it done before in the context of religious celebration. He is in a position now where he would like to see dance included and find out the effect it has on the children dancing as well the spectators. He stressed that it would be very important that the children dancing understand what they are trying to do through their dance. He also was concerned that the children watching would have to be prepared because the initial reaction might be uncomfortable because it is new.

> Anything we are uncomfortable with, we first laugh, I think or you know, that kind of an emotion comes out. So..(because we don't know how to react), for the first time I may see a dance at a religious celebration, as a child in the school, and I'm only the audience, my first reaction might be to laugh and make fun because I don't know how the guy sitting next to me is relating to it. And I think the first response is often, Oh! isn't that silly, isn't that funny and then, when someone else says hey, there's meaning here so it's really important how it's presented, that the people participating understand what they are doing and that the audience understands really what they are trying to do too. And then I think it can grow (p.21).

After this discussion with Al I felt quite free to go ahead and try out my ideas in dance. The children and I would have all the support we needed. It was a real advantage to find a school that seemed to have a history of celebrations, providing me with a very positive atmosphere in which to do my research. I also decided to keep in mind what Al said about the spectators being prepared. It was important for the children that their first experience with dance in celebration be a positive one.

The Children

I started my interviews with all of the children right away hoping to get through them prior to starting the development of the celebration. I wanted to find out what their feelings about religious celebration were before we began developing the dances. The interviews were conducted with groups of four children. I felt that more dialogue would possibly result from interaction when ideas from one could be picked up and expanded by others.

I had looked at the research in religious education and found that most of it dealt with children's understandings of religious concepts and Biblical literature. One such study done by Goldman (1968) on religious thinking from childhood to adolescence, included a section on children's concepts of church. He looked at aspects of the church and tried to determine the kinds of things children liked and disliked about church. The two areas that received the most response were worship and intellectual involvement. The things the children liked the most in worship were the singing, praying, and ceremony. They disliked worship if it was too long, too formal, or the hymns were dull and dreary. Intellectually the children enjoyed stories, readings, and sermons when the examples were modern. They disliked long sermons. This research concurred with research done by Jahoda in 1951 and Hyde in 1963. The results of this research seemed to support the idea that worship for children should be relevant to their life experience. In my interviews with the children I probed some of these ideas further by asking them questions about church, what they liked and what they didn't like.

The information the children gave me about their feelings certainly supported the above findings. There were many comments about what was boring. These comments referred mainly to the length of the service and the complexity of what was being said.

> -when you are just standing up all the time and you want to sit down cause your legs are getting tired and he always keeps you up. (April 5).
>
> -Standing up for half an hour straight. You sit there and they are singing away here. Oh..why don't they sit down? (April 5).
>
> -I can see some ladies when they are standing in their high heels and their legs are shaking away here and they can't stand it so they sit down for five minutes and get up again.(April 5).
>
> -If he reads slow and you always have to stand up. I don't like standing up for a long period of time. (April 10).
>
> -Sometimes I listen to them but when he keeps talking and talking and you have to stand up then I usually

> get sore legs and I just think about how your legs are sore then and you don't pay any attention to what he's saying. (April 12).

Through my interviews I also found out what children found relevant. The experiences they remembered were very concrete. They talked about celebrations when they could do something or handle some object. They also enjoyed unique surroundings as well as singing.

> Karen: Do you like the celebrations at Easter and Christmas?
>
> Child: Only at Christmas cause you get to hold candles.
>
> Child: At Christmas it's nice when they bring up Jesus . . all the stuff for the manger. The horses and the three kings and Jesus and Mary and that.
>
> Child: Well we put up all these big banners and colorful streamers and big balloons and all that.
>
> Child: I like going up ... like there's these stairs and they lead up to the top and there are sisters there and a guy who plays the organ and we are all there and we sing just by ourselves and all that. All the kids and no parents and all that. And you can sing and it's not really boring. They make us sing and some kids do readings and some people sing by themselves and all that, that's what I like.
>
> Karen: Okay, tell me about Christmas. What makes it a nicer celebration?
>
> Child: Well, they shut off all the lights in the church and you light these candles and everybody holds a candle.

I also discovered through these initial interviews that there was a particular priest whom these children related to and remembered. He seemed to be doing some unusual things in his sermons. He brought objects to use in demonstrations; chocolate bars, a globe of the world, footballs, apples, Barbie dolls, trucks and toys. He told "jokes", did demonstrations, called children up to the altar and tried to involve them as much as possible. All this discussion about Father Charlie led me to do an interview with him to find out what it was he was doing that was having such a profound influence on these children. He confirmed what the children had been telling me.

The Priest (May 8)

Father Charlie feels that liturgy should touch people's lives. In other words the ideas talked about should have something to do with what people are living. This becomes difficult when you are dealing with both adults and children in the same setting. Father Charlie's philosophy is that the children's needs must be met. "... they need to be recognized, acknowledged, addressed in a different way and involved" (p.5). He feels that:

> children like drama and acting and humor, and signs, and stories, and they like movement, and they like music and those are the materials that one needs to work with children in liturgy. ..... You gotta use the media that children can work with. Children can handle a certain kind of silence but not usually the way we do. If you get them to bow their heads, and play music and then you talk to them while they've got their heads bowed, and you guide them, they can do that. But, if you just tell them to keep quiet, that's empty (p.7).

You have to work with children on a level that they can understand.

In discussing dance with Father Charlie I discovered that he had some misgivings about its use in liturgy. He feels that dance in our society has become isolated from life except in the area of sexuality. "In the sense that I'm not so sure that we've been educated to allow the human body to be an instrument expressive of prayer" (p.19). He feels that there needs to be a lot of education in this area. In developing dance with children he would have no hesitation.

> I would explain it, I would prepare people ahead of time for it. Explain what it means and why, and I'd make sure it's well done, and then I'd do it. If it was on another level, I still think it's possible to do some and I would do gesture for sure in the parish with adults, and some dancing. But I'd make sure there was an education for it. That would be my general position on it. With children I can see a lot of possibilities. I could just see how excited they'd be about that too (p.20).

Father Charlie reiterated what Al had expressed in terms of preparing both the dancers and the spectators. Dance is a language that must be learned.

Doreen's Reflections

After the final celebration was over Doreen summarized for me some of her thoughts dealing with each part of the research. The following are her comments relating to the preliminary work.

Going back to teaching in the classroom full time after twelve years working as a consultant was a complete culture shock. Contributing to the various emotions I experienced was a group of boys in both grade five and six that had been "problems" since entering the school. In grade five, Stuart was the "leader" who set the example for the rest of the class. He was an excellent manipulator and had almost everyone in the class seeking his approval for their actions. A few boys competed with him, albeit not too successfully. Consequently, when Karen asked to work with my class my initial reaction was of embarrassment in that I hadn't gained control. I was still "finding my way". However, I shared my feelings with Karen and we decided that it would be a worthwhile project for all concerned. I looked forward to each visit. I appreciated all the assistance and support she gave me during the duration of this project.

Developing credibility with the children was really important. They began to look forward to Karen coming. Centering around Christmas was an excellent plan as the children were comfortable with and excited about anything to do with Christmas. Participating in the planning and all other aspects of the development of the Christmas celebration was a unique and joyous experience for the children. All their contributions were taken seriously so that they felt a sense of ownership and pride in their accomplishments. However, many did not have confidence in what they were doing as it was so "different". They would not share with their peers in other classrooms but appreciated the grade two participation.

The preparation and the celebration itself were also very meaningful experiences for me as well and made me feel more positive about participating in this project.

I had the opportunity to observe my class during school religious celebrations and at Mass at both church and school. Generally, the children were extremely restless and did not seem to feel involved but were merely observers. They liked to participate in communion and in the singing. At least at this time they were not "acting up". What came to me as a complete surprise was that my young friend, Stuart, served at the Altar. He enjoyed being active and liked being the center of attention. Maybe this is an unfair comment as who can judge a child's, or adult's for that matter, involvement or degree of piety. However, Stuart was a prime example of the children's need or involvement by actively participating in the service.

Conclusions

Having reviewed the literature regarding the place of dance in celebration in chapter two, and having discussed ideas with relevant people connected with my group of children, I had some simple guidelines that I could incorporate into my work. First of all, the use of a variety of media (art, props, and music as well as movement) would make our celebration more meaningful for the children. Secondly, the preparation of anyone involved in the project was very important. This included spectators as well as participants.

I now felt I knew the children and the general setting well enough to start teaching the dances and preparing for the celebration.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROCESS

Introduction

Chapter four consists of two parts. The first part is a description of the teaching processes used in the build-up for the celebration. The second part is an assessment of the responses to the build-up from the perspective of the researcher, cooperating teacher, and the children involved.

Part One - The Build-up

This part of the research was the teaching process used to develop all the aspects of the celebration. It included the planning and teaching as it evolved with the children, Doreen and myself. Keeping in mind all the ideas I had acquired in the preliminary work regarding celebration for children, an integrated approach was used which included music, art, written work, oral work, and the choosing of a theme.

Choosing the Music

I chose to use music as well as religious themes for the stimuli in my dance work with the children. I never culminate dance lessons without music although the earlier work may be done without. This is a personal preference as

I find the quality of the dance is enhanced with music. In choosing my music I considered selections with and without words. If I could find suitable music with words this would help to provide the imagery. Without words the symbolism in the movement would have to be very strong and recognizing that the children had little movement background I wanted to give them as much assistance as possible. Strickland (1984) in discussing dance in the context of celebration suggested that by using music with words you are developing the unfamiliar by allowing it to grow out of the familiar. I originally intended to use music recommended in the religion program. I chose first a piece that I knew would be familiar to most children 'Peace is Flowing Like a River'. This song ended up not being used in the celebration.

Music became a major problem for me right from this first attempt. The music in the religion program for the most part was inappropriate for dance even though some of the children liked it. This problem was not apparent in the work before Christmas as we simply used Christmas music which is popular with the children. Also, for some reason, children are willing to do things differently at Christmas. We had used one slow song at Christmas. When I mentioned this Stuart (one of the children) replied "yeah but that was Christmas". I tried to find out what kind of music the children liked but was unable to generalize as it varied a great deal from child to child as evidenced by comments in their diaries.

> Annette: I felt really hot and tired but Nana Mouskouri (Simple Gifts) made me fine.
>
> Tracy: I don't like Nana Mouskouri neither does Denise.
>
> Andrew: I like the song (One Little Candle) except it is too slow.
>
> Andrea: I like the music (One Little Candle) the way it is because if it is any faster it won't sound right.
>
> Michael: The 'Chariots of Fire' was pretty good. I like the rhythm.
>
> Melanie: I like the 'Chariots of Fire'. It is nice but it is too long.
>
> Tracy: The kind of music I would like is Michael Jackson such as 'Thriller'.

In the end I had to make the choices of music myself without worrying about trying to find something that appealed to all the children.

Time became the major factor in my choice of music. I finally chose three pieces that had been used successfully in the Alberta Children's Dance Theatre at the University. One piece 'One Little Candle' (from 'The Winnipeg Mennonite Children's Choir Celebration 77') I used in a symbolic way and the design evolved as we worked with it using input from Doreen and the children. (The details of the dances will be discussed further on). Another piece 'Simple Gifts' (from Nana Mouskouri 'Love Goes On') which is a suggested song in the religion program, was a modified version of a dance used in the Alberta Children's dance Theatre as it needed simplification for use with my children. It was a simple partner dance with a repetitive pattern. The third piece 'Titles' (from 'Chariots of Fire' by Vangelis) was put together with the help of my husband and daughter who spent an evening dancing in the living room. When choosing this piece I was looking for music to start the celebration that would capture attention immediately. My husband suggested this one and I rejected it initially mainly because it is an instrumental piece. After thinking about it a little more I decided if we carried something symbolically as we danced we could probably use it. This dance was the one that required the most work but for me was the most rewarding. The children really put energy into this dance. It challenged their social skills as they had to work in groups as well as being the most difficult from a movement point of view.

Choosing A Theme

The original plan in mind was to choose a theme from the children's religion program and develop a celebration around it. Due to the difficulties of finding suitable music for dance, the theme was built around the dances after they were developed. When we were nearing the end of our dance preparation the theme idea was discussed with the children and they were asked to think about it and make suggestions in their diaries. I received one suggestion, 'Rejoice'. I had thought about the idea of 'Happiness' because I knew we could work all of our dances into this theme. Starting with these two ideas I had a discussion with the children about the dances we were doing. We took each dance and listed all the ideas that were represented in that dance. When this was done we added 'Joy' and 'Love' to our ideas for a theme. The children voted on these and we ended up with 'REJOICE'. From these discussions the children were able to write their narrations for the dances. A few days later I found in my readings that the word rejoice in the Aramaic language that Jesus spoke meant dance (Daniels). This is how we ended up with 'REJOICE DANCE AND FOLLOW ME' as the overall message for our celebration.

Dance Work

The first dance attempted was 'Peace is Flowing Like a River' which is a song from the religion program and very familiar to the children. When we tried dancing to it using slow turning actions it did not work well. It was just too 'draggy' which made the movement difficult to sustain. Because many of the children liked this one I tried to get it replayed by a musician in a quicker tempo. When it looked like he was going to be able to get the music ready on time I put together a volunteer group to work on this dance as we had to do it quickly. Only three children did not volunteer, two boys and one girl. As it turned out however the music was not ready on time and we had to drop it.

The next dance I introduced was 'One Little Candle'. This music had been used in the Alberta Children's Dance Theatre and I personally love it. Some of the children did not like the music but because we were using the flashlights with this one it became very popular. The flashlights are an excellent prop as well as having many symbolic possibilities. Jamison (1975) in discussing liturgies for children says:

> Gimmicks, like Christmas bulbs, drama, flowers, balloons and other audio-visuals, focus the attention of the children on the concrete - their level of understanding. The child's perceptions are unique - the child will structure life in his or her own way, and teachers facilitate this experience. We begin with the senses, with objects, and then proceed to mysteries (p. 4).

The flashlights were a very powerful object for the children to use. They loved them and asked to do this dance over and over. This dance was done in a very symbolic way. The lights represented Jesus as the light of the world and showed how we can help light up the world by doing our best. The movement in this dance looked simple because the children only had to walk. It was tricky though because the walking had to be slow and sustained.

We worked for some time to develop this difficult aspect of time. Doreen suggested we add some level changes to this dance by having all the children start low and slowly come up one at a time. These slow controlled sinking and rising actions caused a balance problem for some children. How do you go up and down slowly and not fall over? This should be easy for children at this age but many of them found it difficult. One of the children made the suggestion that one child should walk alone for the first verse as the words to the music talked about 'one little candle'. The child who made the suggestion did this part in the celebration. The timing worked out very nicely with the one child moving for the first verse and the other children beginning when the refrain started. It took just about all the music to get everybody's flashlight on. The last verse starting was the cue to spread out into their own spaces again for the ending which was a big spin with all the lights flickering. The gymnasium lights were out for this dance which provided security for some of them because their movement could not be seen. There were a few problems with children playing games in the dark (hiding against the wall so that no one would find them to light their candle) but these disappeared when they had an audience and it became serious business. Space was a major consideration because the children had to be very sensitive to each other and know where to place themselves so that we didn't have groups of lights all in one place.

The third dance we worked on was 'Simple Gifts' which had been choreographed by the Alberta Children's Dance Theatre. We changed it a little to make it simple enough for my group. We also changed the ending to have it fit in with our idea of reaching out to others and sharing. Because of the repetitive pattern in this dance I decided it would be a good one to have the older children teach to the younger ones. I found out through their diaries that they had really enjoyed working with the younger children at Christmas. It seemed appropriate to do this again. I taught the dance to the older children first. Within the framework of this dance the children were able to make some choices about how they were going to put it together. In the first part they were able to move together or away from each other using sliding steps. In the second part they had to choose their way of travelling backwards. Some did four steps, some skipped and some did two steps backwards and two steps forward. They all ended their pattern with a big turn with arms leading. It was suggested by the children that the grade two children would march in at the beginning and then skip in a circle for the introduction at which time they would meet their partner. The older children worked on this dance twice before teaching it to the grade two children. The way they worked with the younger children was very impressive. They were attentive and very gentle with them. Nurturing would probably be a good descriptive term. The most difficult part of this dance was the last part when they moved around the space in their own floor patterns meeting different partners and swinging around with whomever they met. They had a tendency to crowd in the middle of the floor. I thought I might have to take this part out but it really added to the dance by symbolizing the reaching out to one another and sharing that we wanted. The grade two children had a good movement program this year so they picked this dance up very quickly. We worked on the use of space and it improved a lot. This dance was only practiced three times with the grade two children before the celebration.

The fourth dance, 'Chariots of Fire', was done only by the grade five and six children and became my favorite because of the challenge as well as the power of the music. It was the most difficult dance for the children because the changes in the music were too subtle for some of them to distinguish in order for them to change their actions. There was also a lot of group work and this caused many problems. With only seven boys in this class, none of whom liked working with the girls, it was difficult to put together workable groups.

For this dance we carried flowers to symbolize the beautiful things in life. The children came up with suggestions on how to make these flowers and how to arrange them and place them during the celebration. They brought baskets from home to put them in when they weren't dancing with them. When I finally got the groups worked out for this dance I took the ones that were having difficulty out on their own and worked with them. Some of them needed extra practice in order to remember the patterns of action. Once they were sure of these patterns they became more enthusiastic about this dance. It turned out to be a very popular dance especially with the girls. They loved the music and the group work. The children were given choices in this dance in the second part where they broke into groups and developed their own movement patterns but most of them ended up doing the same things. They were to choose a way of travelling away from their group. They ended up either turning or running backwards. All of the groups chose to run back together meeting in the middle with their arms up. This idea came from one group and the rest copied it. Their beginning and ending shapes were developed on their own. One group had a lot of fights over this. Skipping in a circle was also part of this dance. It was quite a feat to get everyone skipping the same way at the same time. This dance required the most practice but ended up being quite interesting because it was a little more complicated than the others.

Art and Related Crafts

Art was another area I used to integrate this experience into a complete whole. This is not an area of expertise for me so I called on my friends for ideas. Initially I planned for the children to paint but rejected this idea as it required too much organizing. One evening at an aerobics class I saw a balloon tree on the wall of the gym. I decided that would provide all the color we needed if we put up two, one on each side of the stage. I suggested it to the children and they thought it was a great idea. The balloons were very effective and the small children particularly enjoyed them. Popping them after the celebration was a highlight with some of the older children.

The other art idea was banners. It came to my attention in an interview with the children that some of them enjoy doing decorations for the church and they like to read the banners that are up in the church. It was possible that they could plan and make some banners to put up in the gym. I divided them into groups of four and five and they made banners to go with the themes of the dances. This activity proved to be very successful. One of the reasons was that the children had done a poster unit earlier in the year and had studied line, shape, and color related to posters. They had lots of ideas to work with. They really got involved in this. One morning they worked from nine to twelve on their banners and still wanted to carry on. They needed very little input from Doreen and me, and I had the feeling they would not have noticed if we had left the room. The children were very comfortable and confident with this activity.

I still felt we needed something to brighten up the side walls in the gym. We used Ziggy cartoons, an idea I got from a calendar in my office. The children could use a couple of sayings from the calendar as well as try and make up some of their own. This activity was to be done in their spare time. Michael really got involved and did several cartoons. He blew the Ziggy character up by using the overhead projector. Michael happens to have a flair for art. He also drew the trunks for the balloon trees.

The lettering for the theme of our celebration was done by many of the children in their spare time and at recess. They again used the overhead projector to blow up the letters and then traced them. We had REJOICE in large letters and DANCE AND FOLLOW ME below it in smaller letters written across the front of the gym.

The children had a great deal of fun making covers for their diaries. They also made the flowers that they were to carry in the 'Chariots of Fire' dance by using tissue paper for the flowers and and covered wire for the stems. The children also prepared the mini flashlights by covering them in colored tissue paper. The activities in the art area were generally very successful with the children.

Oral Work

Throughout the course of our work we had ongoing discussions. They were mostly informal and happened at various times. I used discussion as a way of giving the children an opportunity to have input into the planning of the celebration.

Through discussion I received from the children many good suggestions that were incorporated into our work together. The children were encouraged to make suggestions and became so enthusiastic they were overwhelming me with ideas. One day I requested that they write all their ideas in their diaries as I couldn't cope with everything they were trying to tell me all at once.

Some children talked a lot and other children never talked but all of them wrote in their diaries.

Written Work

Besides keeping a diary the children also wrote their narration for the celebration themselves. We had five short narrations to write; one for each of the dances and an introduction and conclusion. This was done in groups. The groups were put together by allowing the children to choose what they wanted to write. The children needed a lot of help on this project. They had two difficulties here. First of all, many of them have problems expressing themselves in the written form and, secondly, they did not know how to work as a group to come up with one product that they could all accept. Doreen and I moved around with the groups helping them as much as possible without doing it for them. I suggested that they could use their religion text and see if there were any readings that fitted in with their theme. I found however that what they wrote in their own words was more expressive of what we were doing.

> Simple Gifts
> Open yourself to the gifts of life
> Accept them freely, gratefully.
> Share them with persons you meet.
> Our Father gives these gifts to you, to make you completely happy.
> The best things in life are free - gifts like love and friendship.
> So in this dance, we will show you these things by working together.

I reminded them that in my interviews with them many had suggested that church was boring because they didn't understand what was being said. They were doing their celebration for the younger grades and the little children would have to understand what they were saying. They came up with some short little narrations that explained what they were doing in a simple clear way.

Once the narrations were written they had to choose who was going to read them. Each group solved this problem themselves. One group put the names in a hat and drew one out. Another group had only one person who wanted to read so it was easily decided.

Part Two - Assessment of the Build-up

The next part of this thesis will deal with the responses to our work during the build-up stage. These will be discussed as seen from the points of view of the various participants; the children, the cooperating teacher, and the researcher. These responses were collected from the children's diaries, interviews and my field notes.

I attempted to structure categories based upon the points of view of the participants in the research. Wilcox (in Spindler 1982) states that "Approaches to the analysis of data depend, of course, on the types of data gathered and the conceptual framework employed" (p.461). There seemed to be some key ideas that were repeated and I attempted to develop categories around these ideas.

The Children

The areas that became major considerations in working through this project were Motivation, Relationships and Time Factors.

Motivation

The use of various media was a key motivating factor in working with the children. Involving the kinds of objects that the children enjoy using was a major consideration. The reactions to what we did varied greatly from child to child but with an integrated approach there was something for everyone. The following comments from their diaries illustrate this variance.

> Ezra: Lights are very good. Movement is too slow. I like the candle idea . I don't like the dancing. The music is good.
>
> Maria: I kind of like the music but I think I would like it even more if it was a bit faster. I think the idea of the lights is good because it looks very pretty. I think the idea of the scarves was good but I liked the lights better.
>
> Melanie: ... I like to do lights and scarves, lights in one hand and scarves in the other.
>
> Ela: I sort of liked the song that is played when we were playing with the lights. It's nice and slow and very nice. The lights are very nice to do, it remind me of peace. The scarves is very fun too, doing shapes and things with them; they're like a nice moving river that is steady. The movement is very fun, its nice slow movement instead of everybody fooling around they are very good.
>
> Andrea: I like the music. I don't like spinning around because I get very dizzy. I really like the idea with the flowers.
>
> Jason: I think the lights are a good idea for a celebration.
>
> Tracy: The song One Little Candle isn't bad but it is hard to dance to. I also like the candle flicking......I don't like Nana Maskouri neither does Michelle Q.

Michael: The Chariots of Fire was pretty good. I like the rhythm. For the flowers it looks beautiful.

Andrew: I like the steps to the song. But I think it is a little too slow.

John: I like the music. I think the movement is too fast for the music.

Another motivational factor for the children was the positive comments which I wrote in their diaries. Doreen tells me that they could hardly wait to read them. They treated them as very personal with very little sharing except with close friends. I tried to write back things that would encourage them.

John- You acted in a very responsible way and made it a good experience for the grade twos.

Andrew- You summarized our Christmas celebration very well. I appreciate you writing your ideas down for me.

Through the diaries I was able to answer questions and concerns which they expressed privately but not publicly. The diary became an important and personal way of communication between the children and myself.

Cynthia- Good questions. We are going to finish the dances and don't worry about partners. Everyone will have one. I don't know yet who is coming to our celebration.

Michael- Not to worry it will all work well on Wednesday.

Annette- I'm sure it does. It's too bad it all worked out that way. I'm going to have a special practice with your group.

Andrea- Thanks for your comments. Maybe we can get the floor cleaned up.

Through the diaries the children were able to have input into our project. They gave many good suggestions which I incorporated into the lessons. Most expressed ideas about the props in use or the music. Little suggestion was given to change or expand the movement itself. The following are some of their comments and suggestions.

Sherry: ...And for the celebration I think the girls should wear a dress.

Cynthia: We will maybe put away the flowers in a baskets with lighted sparklers that don't get caught on fire.

Lisa: Do you think we all could get all in a circle and one person would turn the light on and off and then the next person would do it and so on?

Michael: I am wondering because I have an idea that we should do on the record. The high record I'll turn down and the low I'll turn high but not too high.

Tracy: Maybe for Chariots of Fire at the end we can put the flowers in a corner near our group so each corner has a basket.

Andrea: The lights are very pretty looking. They would look nice if all of them were put in a can or vase.

Ela: ...and for the flowers we could maybe one person skip or walk with a basket and go to each person and pick up the flowers.

Tanya: I think we should place the flowers in a basket.

Susan: We can put the flowers in a basket. While we're walking we just drop them in the basket.

Elena: For the theme I was thinking of 'Rejoice'.

Another motivating factor for the children was the work with the grade two children. They began their diaries by describing our Christmas celebration. I discovered that the part most of them remembered was the work with the grade two children. To follow up on this idea I had them write whether they enjoyed working with the grade two class and why. Only one child said he did not enjoy it. This child said it was "embarrassing". The children's reasons for enjoying this work were varied but it is my feeling from their comments that working with the grade two children made them feel important and good about themselves.

> Susan: I thought it was fun because they were tiny children because I like children and I think that they enjoyed working with us....Because they were small and they couldn't make comments.
>
> Bryan: I thought they were very interested in what we were doing. Yes I did enjoy them because they added some fun into it.
>
> Michelle: I had a lot of fun with the grade two class today. My partner was named Sandy and she was doing well.
>
> Maria: I really enjoyed working with the grade twos today. It was really fun to teach them the steps, it was also easy.
>
> Ela: I enjoyed working with them very much because I thought it was very fun and they did everything we told them to do. ....My grade twoer was working very good today. She done everything right what I teach her to and I had fun too.
>
> Andrea: I really enjoyed working with the grade 2 class. They cooperate very well and learn fast.

Jason: They were very good watchers and didn't make fun of us.

Tracy: I had lots of fun with the twoer's. The one I had was easy to teach. And she always followed me like a little puppy dog even at the end.

Michael: Yes I did enjoy them because they wouldn't laugh or make fun. They would just enjoy it.

Dale: It was fun working with the grade twos today. They learn very fast.

Lisa: I didn't mind too much working with the grade 2's because they didn't make any comments.

John: I thought working with the grade 2's was fun. I enjoyed having them alot. I liked having them because I felt a responsibility.

Ann: I loved working with the grade 2 because he listened to me and hardly anyone else.

What could be better for the ego than working with children who think you are wonderful, listen to everything you say, and never criticize?

Relationships

The most difficult part in working with this project was the problems that arose concerning relationships. This included teacher to child, child to child as well as child to group.

There were three boys in this class who took great delight in disrupting the class, the typical "attention getting behaviour" syndrome. The school counselor was working with these children and I saw a definite improvement in their behaviour during the time that I was there. The only way to handle them was to give as much positive feedback as possible and ignore negative behaviour. This can be exhausting at times. When they were impossible, time out was used for short periods.

Another problem was the rivalry and fighting between students. This was particularly exaggerated between boys and girls. The boys did not like to work with the girls and the girls considered the boys silly and generally a nuisance. When I tried putting groups of boys together to work it was usually time to show off and misbehave, particularly with some combinations. These were difficult to split up as there were only seven boys in the class. Again I found the best way to handle these boys was by being as positive as possible and patiently ignoring the negative. When I became totally frustrated I used time out. This was probably more for my benefit than theirs. Fortunately these incidents over the three month period were few.

The only child in the classroom that I had personal problems with was a boy who approached life in a very negative manner. This I find difficult to tolerate. The children that clown around or have emotional problems do not upset me but the grouchy, negative child does. This particular child was always unhappy and eventually was given the choice not to participate. He decided to opt out but in a few days changed his mind and made an attempt to change his attitude. Apparently his mother decided he should request to be allowed to rejoin the group. He worked well after this and claimed afterwards to have enjoyed the experience.

Time

Time became an important factor in this project. The person affected the most was Doreen because of the length of time the project took and the amount of extra work for her. A project like this requires a lot of organizing and means a lot of disruption in the regular time table. Children get very excited and become difficult to settle down. I would work with them and then leave them all excited and Doreen would have to cope with them for the rest of the day. There were times when Doreen wished she had not been involved but for the most part she felt the time was well spent.

Doreen's Reflections

The following comments are Doreen's response to the process.

> As Karen indicated, there were times when I felt that my daily schedule was completely out of control. The children enjoyed all aspects of this project so much that they wanted to work on it most of the time. There were many times that my conscience bothered me about the time spent away from academic work. However, philosophically, I truly believe that it is important for children to feel happy about coming to school and to look forward to the activities

> scheduled. Learning seems to be a more positive venture under these circumstances. Consequently, I started looking at this project from a different perspective. Participation helped many of the children to further develop skills of cooperation, listening to one another and working together toward a common goal. I took advantage of this by developing other group projects in science and social studies. The children had progressed in their ability to work together from the first group project which was aborted earlier in the year.
>
> I felt very comfortable with the steps Karen planned and the individual attention she gave each child. She was extremely sensitive to the personalities she was working with. They were certainly varied to the extreme. What I appreciated, personally, was her sensitivity to my frustration. Working through this process with Karen helped me to put a lot of experience into perspective and to feel more comfortable with my way of working with children in the classroom. There were times when I wasn't sure where we were heading and what the end result would be. However, I had a great deal of faith in Karen and learned and developed along with the children. The integration with art, language art (communication skills), music, group work, etc. was frustrating sometimes as I pointed out earlier, because once they were working so well on each project I hesitated to interrupt and move to other subjects. However, if there was any sign of disintegration of their concentration I had no difficulty terminating.
>
> What was important about the process was the constant focus on the reason for doing the work...the celebration itself and the meaning behind each stage of development.

Conclusions

Through the process of developing this project the children gained a deepening commitment to it and the understanding of its meaning became clearer to them. This became evident by the quality of the dance work they were producing and their growing enthusiasm. The major challenge was to keep this enthusiasm going.

The problems that occurred were not earth shattering and not particularly related to the dance content. They were more the typical kind of day-to-day problems that are faced every day in a classroom full of children. Twenty children and a teacher all trying to live in a confined space all day is quite a challenge. Also the difficulty Doreen experienced coming to terms with the time a project such as this required and the demands of prescribed curriculum is a common concern I have heard voiced by many teachers.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CELEBRATION

Introduction

This chapter dealing with the final celebration and the responses to it is divided into four parts. The first part deals with the final preparations for the celebration. The second part deals with the celebration itself and the immediate and general reaction to the celebration by the spectators. The third part deals with indepth responses from the four adults interviewed. The fourth part discusses the responses of the children themselves.

Part One - Final Preparations for the Celebration

The final preparations for the celebration were totally exhausting for both Doreen and me. I don't know how tired the children were but I do know that they were very excited. In order to give the reader an idea of the way it was those last few days I am including the field notes.

May 2

When I got to the class today the banners were finished, the flowers were ready and the flashlights were all redone. The banners turned out beautifully. I was really impressed because the children had come up with all the ideas with their groups on their own. I hadn't expected the banners to turn out this well.

We were expecting Hank to arrive for video taping at nine thirty so Doreen took the children into the gym for their regular session. I got everything into the gym and ready. Hank phoned to say he would be late so Doreen continued with gymnastics until he arrived.

We started out with the grade twos and filmed the whole dance through once and then divided them into two groups and filmed each group. This dance went very well with the exception of John who really got silly when the camera was on. The next dance we filmed was 'Chariots' and we started out doing the whole dance through with all the groups. I had to stop it right away because Bobby and John (due to sitting out before) didn't know what to do and the two girls they were with were really mad at them. I told them to sit down and watch once and then join in the next time. We continued to film the whole dance through. After this I wanted to focus in on a few groups so I had the most secure group go first. We were just getting ready to film the next group when the recess bell rang. We decided to have a break and continue after.

After recess we got two more groups filmed. Hank was running out of video so we decided to do 'One Little Candle' to see if he could pick it up. We ran through it twice.

When I see the video I will find out if I have enough of the detail that I want, mainly the different intensities of response between children. If I need more Hank will come out again. He will be out to film the complete celebration as well. We set the date for May 9.

It was an exhausting morning, at least three days long. I was generally pleased with their work but I was quite surprised at how much silliness went on. My experience has been that the children usually take the taping sessions very seriously. I was particularly surprised at John.

Groups in this class are a real problem. With only seven boys, and they don't like to work with girls, it is hard to split up problems. I still might have to move Ann as the boys are too mad at her now and she can't do anything right as far as they are concerned. Over the next few days I'm going to work with each group for the Chariots dance on their own. Elena is the only one in the class who can hear the ending in the music and the subtle changes. I will probably have the rest take their cue from her. Otherwise they all go into their finishing positions too soon.

May 3

This morning I took Bobby and Michael out to the art room to make the two tree trunks for the balloon trees. I chose Bobby so that he would have some input as he was out for a few days. Michael is very good at drawing so he drew the outlines of the trunk and branches and then Bobby and I did the tearing out. It was a simle process that took about twenty five minutes. As we were walking back to class Michael asked me if he and Bobby could put the trees up. I decided we would get the caretaker to do it as they are very tall (about seven feet).

The person who is redoing the 'Peace' song for me has now finished it. I decided I will put this dance back in but with a select (volunteer) group. I am doing this for two reasons. First of all, I need to do it quickly. A volunteer group is not likely to have any behaviour problems. Secondly, I am interested in finding out which children will volunteer. I will be able to work with these children any time including recess.

Doreen and I went over the last few things we have to do before next Wednesday. We decided to invite only two other classes besides the grade twos we are working with. We will invite the other grade two class and the split grade three and four. We feel this is enough for the children to cope with for their first time. We also don't want to expose them as yet to the scrutiny of their peers (the other grade fives and sixes). Their parents will also be invited. With so many working I don't know how many will attend. Al asked me if he could ask the elementary supervisor as he had expressed an interest. I told him to go ahead. The more feedback I get the better. Sally (dance theater teacher) is also going to try and come as Joyce has meetings. Sally can be my critic. Both school administrators will be there. The religious education supervisor will also be invited. After the celebration we will have a get together with some goodies to eat.

May 4

Today was another long and tiring morning. I think I'm coming down with the flu or something just to make life more exciting. For the first twenty minutes today I worked with the group with Ann and Stuart in it. We got them all sorted out and working well together. After recess I took the group with Bobby and John out on their own and we went over the dance. They did very well and everybody knows what to do. I then took out the group who had volunteered to do the Peace dance. To my surprise I ended up with four boys. The volunteering process was really interesting because peer pressure was really at work. About seven girls immediately put up their hands and when the others saw who had put up their hands a few more hands went up. Michael put his hand up and I said, "good for you Michael", and up went Jason and Andrew's hands. Stuart followed which surprised me as he is one of the more 'macho' types. The only girl who did not want to take part was Maria. I was surprised at this as I thought she was enjoying herself.

We 'fooled around' with the peace dance a little bit and decided to use the colored scarves. I think the scarves will help to add some color as the movement in this one is not that great. Even speeded up it is difficult to do but I think we'll go ahead as the children like it. They think they look pretty with the scarves flowing about. Stuart was really clowning around so I sent him back to class as we have very little time left and this is a volunteer group. Doreen mentioned that when the children came back they said they liked working with the smaller group, that it was a lot better. I think the children who are really involved get fed up with the disruptions from the others.

It was nearly noon when I left the school and driving back to university I was thinking how frustrating it was that these children can get to grade five and six and have such poor movement skills. They have difficulty skipping. When they turn they look like they are going to fall over their own feet. Annette fell over this morning trying to do a little run backwards. This to me is a sad statement about physical education in our schools which reflects the values of the general society. It also concerns me that boys do not consider dance or music as being male activities. Doreen tells me that most of them are not coming to the music evening. I wonder if we had a proper program in the arts from grade one so that these children developed skills they could be proud of if this would make a difference. I feel it would. We are doing them a terrible disservice by not developing this aspect of the child. We are closing a lot of doors on them.

Monday the music consultant needs the gym so I will work around him and have a run through right at nine. He said he could start a little later if need be.

I talked to Doreen about the exhaustion of having a project like this going on in the classroom. I was teasing her because I get to leave and she has to stay. I come in and hype the children up and then I leave them with her. She said it is certainly easier to be the outsider coming in and she has gained a lot of insight into the teacher's side as she used to be the one coming in (as a consultant). There are moments when she wishes she wasn't involved especially when there are behaviour problems as she feels responsible for her class. For the most part however she feels it is valuable for the children and one really can't avoid the excitement when they are doing something like this.

May 7

Well, we had our final run through this morning. We did it quite quickly as the music consultant was having another practice in the gym. I thought they did 'Chariots of Fire' better than they ever have. I hope this doesn't mean they won't do it well for the celebration. You know the old saying that a good rehearsal is a bad omen. John and Bobby did much better now that they know the dance well. Ann and Stuart didn't have any fights this morning. As soon as we finished I left the school to go and pick up the supplies we needed: balloons, paper plates, crackers, punch, and pop. I took all of this back to the school so I wouldn't have too much to bring on Wednesday morning. Doreen decided she would get the children to blow up the balloons for the balloon trees just before home time. They would put them in garbage bags and store them in the closet over night.

I left the school about noon and went for a bite of lunch before finishing my shopping. I went to two different places before I could get my videos. Hank had given me the wrong place. After that I went to get the rest of the groceries for the food my aunt and I were making for the celebration. I went to a religious supply store to get napkins and what a find! I got napkins with the word rejoice written all over them. I knew the kids would think that was neat. I got to my aunt's place at four o'clock. We finished about midnight. Everyone ought to have an Aunty Bee. We made all kinds of squares, washed vegetables, and made dip. My aunt made a huge cake and decorated it with a cross and wrote 'Rejoice' on the top of it. If this was my own class I would get the mothers to bring food but I didn't want Doreen worrying about it and I wanted it to be my treat for all the hard work and cooperation I got.

May 8

Today we are just going to do the decorating in the gym. No dancing. I want them to have one day before without going through the dances so they will be fresher tomorrow.

We decided we would work in small groups in the gym and keep changing the groups. This worked quite nicely. By recess time we had everything done except to put the balloons on the trees. We had to borrow a ten foot ladder to put the trees up and we would have to have someone on top of it to get the balloons up.

After recess we decided to have the whole class come into the gym. We put them in groups, each with their own bag of balloons. They were to put the strips of tape on the balloons and hand them up to Andrew and Bobby who were taping them on to the trees. Talk about chaos. Balloons popping all over the place. Good thing we blew up 150 balloons. The ones that were over blown popped easily. For me this was the most stressful part because of the noise. I hate the sound of balloons popping. It really grates on my nerves. At about five to twelve Doreen said to me teasingly "your voice is getting a little high Mrs. Denis". I replied that it was a good thing I didn't have a tape recorder on. It WAS a good thing that we were finished. I was exhausted. I'm sure Doreen was too and she still had a whole afternoon ahead of her with the kids. The gym, however, looked very beautiful. The balloon trees are really effective.

I left the school and went and had a peaceful lunch. I then went home, had a nice hot soak in the tub before getting ready to interview Father Charlie who the children talked so much about.

The Big Day

May 9

I woke up this morning and couldn't believe how awful I felt. I didn't want to go to the school. I had such a case of nerves. Gilles said to me "Aren't you excited"? I said "no I really don't want to do it. It's too risky. What if everyone hates it? The dances aren't that good, etc. etc". Anyway I loaded all the food into the car and was on my way. I decided I would bring my little tape recorder to school and turn it on after the celebration to pick up comments only to discover that it had been left on and the batteries were dead. I stopped at a store near the school to get some new ones. They didn't have the right size and it took at least five minutes to get back out into the traffic. By now I'm beginning to panic about being late as I figured some of the balloons would be off the wall and have to be put back up. What if they all fell down? I arrived at the school to find that Doreen had been there at seven fifteen but had forgot her keys. She had only just got into the school at eight.

A few balloons were down but not that many. Andrew and a couple of other boys were there and they took care of the trees. Doreen and I got the food ready. The grade 2 teacher came in and helped us. The assistant principal got the microphone set up. While all of this was going on Hank (camera man) phoned to say he was having technical problems and would arrive at 9:40. This is the time we were to start so I knew by the time he was set up we would be starting about ten minutes late. Meanwhile the bell had rung and Doreen had gone to her class. She was going to have the children write in their diaries how they were feeling before the celebration. This gave them something to do while waiting. The elementary supervisor had arrived as well as the religious education consultant. I chatted with them a little about what I was doing so they would be prepared. I wandered down to Doreen's classroom a few times but they were working so quietly and calmly in their desks I decided to stay away in case I hyped them up.

Hank arrived and when he was set up we brought the grade sixes in and got them ready to start. By this time there were about ten or fifteen parents in the gym. I asked the assistant principal to bring the other classes in and we were ready to start.

I quickly explained to the audience that the children would be expressing Jesus' message in a very different way and to be really still and quiet. I told them they would have to tell their teacher about the message afterwards. The first narrator went up and began the celebration. The children danced like they have never danced before. I couldn't believe it. I could feel myself getting very emotional. It was a good thing the lights were out for the last dance. It gave me a chance to get myself together. When they finished the last dance there was a spontaneous big applause which I didn't expect because they still had a little bit to read yet. The only bad part was the microphone. It was hard to hear the children. We discovered after that it was turned down low.

The immediate response to the celebration was so positive I was left a little speechless. One teacher had tears in her eyes. Another one said she had goose bumps up and down her arms. Another one said we should be doing this in church. The principal asked me if we could do it again for the whole school later in the morning as it was too beautiful not to share with the rest of the school. The religion consultant said it was a breakthrough in celebration for children and added a dimension that has never even been looked at. Two of the teachers began talking about adding dance to their celebrations. One teacher asked me if I would help her put some dance into the year end celebration. The religion consultant stayed at the school to see it again and sat down and began planning how dance could be incorporated into the traditional celebration format. The elementary supervisor said he was so glad he had come. He wouldn't have wanted to miss it for anything. Several parents came to express their thanks and say how much they enjoyed it. Bryan's mother said how glad she was that Bryan had changed his mind and stayed in the celebration. One mother even noticed the napkins and took one home with her. The food of course was a great success.

We did it again for the whole school at 11:30. I thought they might not do it as well the second time but they did. Also we had the microphone working this time. Jeff and Jason had a few problems because their peers were now watching. They were a bit giddy at first but they controlled it well. At the end I was presented with a school t-shirt which I thought was a really nice gesture.

Afterwards Bryan came running up to Doreen and said "do something about those other grade sixes". I asked him if they were giving them a hard time about dancing. He said "yeah they said we were yikky". Al replied "you know why they're saying that don't you"? They all replied in a chorus "yeah they're just jealous because they didn't do it". This seemed to satisfy them.

One sad note. Eddie, who had decided not to take part, had to spend the time in the library. Doreen said he had shed some tears that morning. I'm glad I didn't see that as I might have given in and let him come which would not have been a good idea. He did come in and join us near the end of the party. He also came and helped me put up a few balloons before the second time around. By this time he was just about back to his cheerful self. I felt badly about Eddie because I only lost him at the end. Perhaps if I hadn't taken quite so long with the preparations he would have hung in. He then would have had all the positive feedback the others got today. I'm going to try and interview him on his own.

Tomorrow I start my final interviews.

Doreen's Reflections

The following are Doreen's comments regarding the celebration.

> Something that started bothering me when final

planning for the celebration was being discussed was the "sharing" with other classes and with the school as a whole. The rest of the staff, I knew, would benefit from participating in the celebration. However, the line between a celebration, where the participants are actively involved, and a "show" where there are "observers" or an audience seems to be very narrow. I was concerned that the children would feel that this was a "show". Perhaps some of them did, but generally, the class projected a total understanding of what they were doing and why. This came across in many ways during the process of preparation and mainly in the celebration itself. Facial expressions, their readings, the whole process of working together was superb. I experienced many emotions while observing - not only concern that everything would go well, but pride, joy, and a total involvement with the theme "Rejoice". It was a very uplifting experience to share.

I had experienced a number of difficulties teaching the religion program and did not prepare other celebrations as I felt incapable of making them meaningful for the children. This was a "meaningful" experience! I would gladly repeat it!

Conclusions

The feeling after the celebration was one of general excitement. The performance had gone very smoothly. The children who were dancing had a different feeling about the acceptance of the first performance as compared to the second performance. The reasons for this were probed when I interviewed the children and will be discussed later. The celebration seemed to have a very emotional impact on people. The reasons for this was to become a major focus in my follow-up investigation.

Part Two - Initial Reaction of The Spectators

Again in looking at the reactions of the spectators I attemted to pull out categories from ideas that were repeated throughout the data.

Adults

The adults involved in the celebration included parents, other teachers in the school, the principal, the elementary supervisor from central office, and the religion consultant. Due to time constraints I only interviewed four of these people formally: the principal, the cooperating teacher, the elementary supervisor, and the religion consultant. These will be dealt with in part three. I was hesitant to take up the time of teachers in the school so I just talked to them informally. Many of the parents had taken time off work to be there so I didn't attempt to take up any more of their time. I tried to pick up as much from them as I could while we were having refreshments after the celebration.

Parents

The general response of the parents was very positive. They would like to see the children do more of this kind of activity. Most of the parents came to me or to Doreen afterwards to express their appreciation. One parent thought we should put the video on cable televison so more people could see it. Bryan's mother was very glad that he had rejoined the group and taken part. There was one father there and he expressed that he was pleasantly surprised at what he saw. He said that Jeff had only talked about it for a few days prior to the celebration and he got the feeling from what he said that it was important for him to be there. It was a new experience for him to see boys involved in this kind of activity and he was in favor of the idea. I was able to glean a little more about the parents responses from the children's interviews.

> -My mom said she really liked it and she said 'Well you're gonna have to do that to show my grandma and everything'...cause...She'll buy the record 'Chariots of Fire' and she wants to get one (May 10, P.7).
>
> -My mom said she really liked it and she was glad she came. Of course she liked the end the most. She was talking to Andrea's mom and she thought it was really good.
>
> -She liked the way we really showed our feelings. When we did the dances.

The following conversation dealing with parents feelings about the celebration took place on May 14.

> Child: My mom especially liked 'One Little Candle'.
>
> Karen: She liked that one best? How about your mom?
>
> Child: She said she liked 'Simple Gifts' better. She said it was really meaningful for her.
>
> Karen: In what way?
>
> Child: I don't know. She just said it had a lot of feeling.

Karen: Okay, Jeff, what about your dad?

Child: Well, he thought it was really good and he thought that it went better...like, if I ever took this again in the future, you know, in Grade 7 and that, that I would know how to listen and that, and not to goof off and..."

Karen: So did he talk about any bits of it that you did , or...

Child: No well, he didn't pick out any particular part that he liked the most or anything. He just talked about it generally.

Child: My mom said she liked it all except uh, she thought 'One Little Candle' had the most meaning to it. The way Annette went around and how we all joined up...We all ended up.

Karen: That one's pretty obvious isn't it? Pretty clear.

Child: How we'd all got together and given the world love and rejoice and lights.

The responses that I got from parents were pretty general but enough to indicate a "positive feeling" about the celebration and there was no objection to putting dance in the context of religious celebration.

Teachers and Children

The general response from the teachers was very positive. It was also very emotional with 'tears and goose bumps'. One teacher couldn't believe it was those children up there. "..to do That with That class was incredible". I took this remark to mean that they were a difficult group to work with. This was clarified later in an interview with some of the children. They saw themselves as a difficult class. "Because sometimes like our class isn't one of the greatest classes in the school and then when we do something good like that, it kind of says 'oh, this class can do something good sometimes' (May 14, p.38).

I tried to catch individual teachers on the days when I was back to interview children. The celebration was discussed with them in a little more detail at this time. Their approach to it was very practical in that they looked at it from the point of view of what their children got out of watching it and what they thought the children gained from dancing.

The grade four teacher discussed the celebration with his class and listed some of their ideas for me. They felt that it could be understood well even though there wasn't much talking. The different structure, that is the dancing, made the celebration more interesting. They particularly enjoyed the sharing with the grade two class. This teacher said he would like to do some of this work but he would need lesson plans telling him how to go about it.

The grade three/four teacher discussed the celebration with her children in order to find out if they understood what was going on in the celebration. She felt it was very meaningful in that they understood the symbolism in the dances. This particular teacher had been contemplating putting some movement and gesture into her celebrations and seeing this one gave her the impetus to go ahead and try it next year.

The grade three teacher related very much to the celebration because it meshed so well with the ideas in the grade three program. Her children recognized the theme of love lighting the darkness because it is the major theme in the grade three program. They wrote some of their comments down for me. These comments just give an indication of the kind of things that had an impact on the children. The strongest aspect for them was the visual: the flashlights, flowers, and actions.

Justin: I liked it when all of the children were going around in circles.

Terry: I like when they had the flowers when they were dancing.

Anish: I like the part with the flowers.

Derek: Their actions were beautiful.

Rodrigo: I like the part where they were turning the flowers in circles.

Corinne: I like the decorations.

Neil: I liked the celebration. It was good and I liked the dances.

Most of the children made comments about the flashlights. These made a strong impression on these children.

George: I loved the fire flowers.

Chris: It was neat how the lights floated in the darkness.

Justin: I like it when there was one light and then all the lights were all on.

Terry: I like the light when it was dark.

Edna: It was a nice celebration and the end of the prayer was so beautiful.

Derek: I liked the glowing flowers.

One very bright boy (teacher's description) said that he got a lump in his throat watching the celebration. He said that dancing was like praying three times. When asked to explain this he stated "well singing is praying twice so dancing is praying three times" (Curtis). Along this same vein a little girl said she liked it because "it was a prayer and dance" (Joey).

A couple of children talked about the meaning of the celebration.

Elena: I thought it made us learn more about God.

Desi: I think that the message was spread the word of God.

George: I think the message was one person spreaded the word of God to the rest.

In order to find out what these statements actually meant to these children I would have had to probe their religious understanding and this was beyond the scope of this thesis. None of these children mentioned the music.

The grade two teacher and the grade five teacher who are responsible for the year end celebration decided to attempt incorporating some dance into this celebration. They were quite excited about the idea. Neither of them have a movement background but they both do a lot of celebrations in their own classrooms and have helped out a lot with school celebrations. They were confident about trying this out. I personally had qualms about this and was interested to see if they would carry out their plans.

Conclusions

The initial reaction and general response to the celebration was very positive for both the children and the adults. The grade three children illustrated a strong response to the visual stimuli. These conclusions will be discussed in detail in chapter six.

Part Three - Intensive Interviews with Adults

The adults I interviewed each brought their own perspective to the celebration. Their reactions to it were strongly connected to their personal perspective as well as their job perspective. I am therefore presenting each one separately and then will draw some general conclusions.

The Principal (A1) (May 25)

Initial Reaction

A1's initial reaction was very positive. He was moved emotionally by the celebration.

> I was moved and I thought it was fantastic. ... I was moved from the point of view of what it did to me personally. What the children did gave a certain message to me that made me feel pretty good as a person. As a Christian. I think I was moved by the reaction of the participants in the celebration. Their involvement and their commitment to what they were doing was heartwarming. The reaction of the observers. They were very quiet and very intrigued with it all. They were really listening to it. Then the comments afterwards from children that had watched it and the teachers who had taken part. Nothing but positive comments.

Personal Impact or Interpretation

The meaning for A1 was in the way he interpreted the celebration. It told a story for him.

> You presented three dances. I don't know what each of them were called, but if I run through the three, the first dance basically showed me, this is one theme I got. There probably are many. One I got was, the first dance was really for the participants themselves. It was their expression of love to God and their expression of thanksgiving to God by the way, by what they did. I felt that. The second dance, which involved outside children but from their school (outside of their classroom) it was taking that love and sharing it with people close to you. People that you live with in your community. The third one, to me it was more global. We must as Christians take our love and take the gospel and spread it, spread the good news throughout the world. That's our mission. And I felt the children gave me that message. I think it could be interpreted and explained to the children who observed it in that way too, when I reflect on it. I got the feeling that the children started with a celebration that was sort of theirs. The first dance was their own expression of something. The

> second dance they expanded it to the people they worked with most closely and third to extend that out into the world. That's what I felt.

I found this interpretation of Al's really interesting because it had never crossed my mind. It was not done this way deliberately.

Affective Response

The celebration evoked some strong feelings in Al as a result of the interpretation he put on it. He was able to relate to it in a strong emotional way.

> It put a lump in my throat if I really listened to the music and really watched the movement, their movement as they performed the dance. Some of the movement sort of picked up the audience and you were with them. I really felt you were with them as they moved. And it was kind of, it put a lump in your throat because I think it was a joyful thing. It said 'Hey, isn't it great to be a Christian and to show it to others'. And it was being accepted. Like it was, I said 'Too bad we can't be more expressive.' We don't have enough emotion in our religion. We are afraid of that. Because we were brought up in the old church. I'm talking about people you know, like post Vatican II, we were not...we did not show our emotion in our religion and I think we have an opportunity here with children to bring emotion into their religion, because religion is a way of life and every thing we do is based on our emotions so much.

Aesthetic Dimension

Al saw a strong aesthetic dimension in the celebration which he found pleasing to watch.

> The props used. The flowers. The lighted candle the way you did it. There was a beautiful color. Soft spring colors that were used. I thought that was

> aesthetic and beautiful. The one with the candle where they start with one and it grows. I mean, one light and then two and then four and so on. I mean, that's aesthetic. When you see these lights popping in front of you. The total darkness gave it such an impact. What I saw in part of that dance with the light. After everyone had received the light and then was going to spread the good news,...it looked like a procession. Whether it was meant that way, I don't know. But, it looked like because of the movement of the people with just their light, it was like an ongoing never ending procession of spreading the good news. Aesthetically, it was a beautiful...it was an unending road, because no matter where you looked at the performance, there wasn't an end to it. .... Aesthetically it's a dance, and the movement that some of those children have begun to do. I thought it was beautiful. Some really have rhythm and other's don't. That's natural. But even some of the children who are more self-conscious of maybe their size or their movement, I felt really tried their best. They tried, I think they kind of let everything go. And their movement itself was aesthetically good.

The effort the children put in to the dances meant a lot to Al. He also felt that the quality of their movement, although it varied from child to child, was generally good and appealing to watch.

Meaning For the Children

The meaning for the children who were dancing, from Al's point of view, was the involvement at their own level of development.

> One thing is, it's more meaningful because they participate. They're actively involved, or at least a number of their peers are involved in it. So that should enhance the celebration. If they take part. I think if it's done properly the kind of movement that they express is where they're at. Like, in their life. It's a life experience for them and the way they express themselves is their form of prayer in a

> sense and their form of saying something. An adult may do the dance totally differently. So it's coming right to what we said earlier. It's putting emotion on their face and expressing it in front of others. In a very good way.

The meaning for the children watching was the enjoyment of watching other children perform.

> .... but just by the smiles on their faces and, just the way they walked around showed that they got something out of it. It was done by children at their age level. It was done for children of their same age level. It was done for them and I think that's why it was more meaningful. It wasn't adults putting on a show for children. It was children putting on a celebration for children.

The Religion Consultant (Carolyn) May 22

Initial Reaction

Carolyn had a very powerful reaction to the celebration. For her it was totally involving. She sees a lot of celebrations as part of her job and therefore looked at it in relation to other celebrations she had seen. She felt it had a quality missing in most celebrations. This is clarified in the following discussion dealing with the personal impact.

Personal Impact

> My general reaction was very powerful. I found it a very moving kind of experience. I, for one, got goose bumps up my arms and I noticed that some of the other people did too. Visually, it was beautiful. The whole thing together. The music, the dancing and the

> visual, like, it just in a sense took your breath away. The response was, I would guess, what you set out to do. You know. It moved me in a real way. Like it wasn't just an academic sort of way. I was involved and obviously that's what celebration is all about. Is to feel involved. And I felt involved even just sitting there. You know. The kids themselves appeared to be very much involved as they moved forward they seemed to know very well what they were doing. But, it wasn't just that they knew what they were doing. It was the overallness of the celebration. ... look at the elements that were there. The gym was decorated. The music was there. The lights were according to what they should have been. There were people around. The atmosphere would have been set by any number of celebrations. Any teacher who sets out to have a celebration would have a lot of that stuff in place. But, ... and many times there's a flatness about it. Which was not in the dance celebration. This dance celebration the flatness was gone and the happiness or the joy or the involvement, the reaching out and touching somebody, all of those elements were in there and those are all the elements of a good celebration. Celebration for the religion department for example is often a prayer or putting yourself in touch with God and a lot of them go through the stages and they do an excellent job but this one did actually move you to the point of having goose bumps or a sense of awe or a sense of ... well, being involved. There's no doubt about it. Of being a part of it. Of being called out of yourself for a minute. Of being called into the celebration. Of actually being into it a little bit.

Affective Response

Carolyn had difficulty defining or discussing the celebration in terms of what made it different. Perhaps there are things that cannot be described in words.

> .... I can't exactly put my finger on what it was that was different. ... I wanted to watch it again and again, and I would liked to have called in a bunch of other teachers and say 'I want you to see something special'. ... I was called to appreciate and to enjoy and I was not frightened or intimidated by the call, which in many cases you can be (referring here to the charismatic celebration).

Aesthetic Dimension

The discussion of the visual impact was interesting because it again dealt very much with feelings. Carolyn had difficulty separating herself from the emotional impact the celebration seemed to have on her.

> When the little ones came forward and inter-mingled with the big ones, like that visually said something so important. You know. That it's okay. There's a certain okayness about being together. A certain playfulness. A certain joy that came into that part when those little ones moved forward and joined in with the big ones and they danced around together. And that's a certain openness. The kids were open to each other. The little ones went forward happily and the big ones reached out and they twisted or turned or what ever they did. But, it spelled an openness. One to the other. That was visible. And I thought powerful. I was moved by the little ones when they started to move up and get involved and that sort of thing, and the way they looked for each other. You know, as they danced around, if they had gone quite a distance without touching ... and the way they were open to the possibility of seeing someone to twirl around with.

Meaning For the Children

Carolyn discussed meaning for the children dancing in terms of the feelings she sensed in the children.

> Yeah so they might have gone ... half the distance across your gym without having touched somebody when suddenly they were open and available and looking ... they weren't all by themselves anymore. The sense of belonging there, of needing someone to be with them, the sense of community was created by that. I saw one of your big boys. A big heavy boy. ... he went almost all the way across by himself, but then somebody came and got him and his sense of belonging...there was no doubt about it. .... he was beginning to feel it as he went quite a distance. I could see him the whatever, on his face change ever so slightly when he had gone quite a distance without touching someone.

> Then someone reached out and touched him and suddenly he was totally involved again. You know. So it made him a member of that troupe, by just being touched by somebody. So he felt it. It wasn't just saying the way we do to kids all the time. You know 'you should be nice to your friends' or whatever. .... he really felt whoever it was who reached out and touched him and swung around the circle with him, and so he would know in a deeper way what it means to be with people. To be touched by people. To be a part of a community.

Carolyn also saw the celebration as a positive experience for the children. She describes this in the following way.

> .... when one of the boys got the giggles, an uncontrollable sort of a giggle, you know the kind, and he couldn't stop himself. Now, that happens every once in a while. But the troupe didn't come apart. ... he was left alone with his giggles until he could control it. ...And the troupe didn't lose it in the sense that I've seen it happen other times where one kid misbehaves. Suddenly the attention of the celebration is gone and it turns to the misbehaving person. And so you lose your prayerfulness. See, and this kid went through that stage and the celebration never deteriorated at all. It just carried right on. It cut its own weight and it just moved right along.
>
> I'll bet if it had been another sort of celebration, that when it was over, you would have heard someone say 'I want that child to go to the office' or 'Mr. A., will you speak to that child?' or something of that nature. I bet you never heard that once from one person. Because it created no anger. And yet other times when you have celebrations, and somebody loses control, you get anger. And yet it wasn't there. So that's why I see this as such a positive um...like, a really positive thing. And it just struck me as being so totally positive. Everything about it struck me as being very, very positive. If you ask me to be critical about it, I don't think I'd be able to. Really. In all honesty. To be able to say you know, 'It was too long or too short' or 'the music was too loud' or what ever. I can't do any of that. I don't have any ... because it struck me as extremely positive. The whole thing. And those are the kinds of things. Because the attention was not lost. With all the children in the school

> sitting in the back of the gym, the attention was not lost. Nobody came out angry. Not one single person. I've been to lots of celebrations, where the teacher is angry, or the principal is angry or people have apologized to me for the way the kids behaved. All kinds of things. And I bet you didn't get one word about that. I never heard one word of that when I was there. I only heard people saying what an excellent celebration it was and that's the only thing. So I think the response must have been positive on everybody's part.

Carolyn also discussed the meaning of performance for the children. She saw it as an expression of something rather than a polished performance with excellence as the goal.

> And another thing that you cannot say that it was, was excellence of performance. Because you were taking ordinary kids, out of an ordinary classroom, who basically lacked dancing skills. So, you can't say it's because their performance was so excellent that they took your breath away. So, it wasn't that element either....But, you see that's not what you're talking about here. That's not what took the kids (spectators) by surprise. The fact that they were watching something that was better than they could do or anything like that. You know, there was lots of good dancing going on and lots of good dancers, but still. Like, my kids are in ballet too, so I saw lots of jumps that weren't high enough and arms that weren't extended enough and that sort of thing, but that had absolutely nothing to do with it. That's not what they were saying. They were not saying 'look how perfect I am'. They were saying something else. They were reaching out in that sense.
>
> I've forgotten what some of the themes were now, but I felt that the dancers were saying what we had been told they were going to say. .... I forget which one, but the first performance (I forget which dance) that I watched, now whether it was the second or third dance, I don't remember, but there was a girl who came from the left hand corner down toward the audience and she ran up toward the middle. I don't know whether she's a dancer or not, but certainly from that particular expression there is no reason in the world why she couldn't have been, and shouldn't have been. You know. Her expression was so touching.

> So moving. She expressed exactly what it was she set out to express when she ran from the corner up toward the center. She raised her hands like this. .... She particularly caught my eye on that particular movement. ... At the beginning of each one, some child stated the theme of that particular one. And it just struck me you know 'God, that was good'.

Carolyn also felt the children had a feeling of accomplishment in their performance which was expressed through the obvious fun and enjoyment they were having as they danced. She felt that the children had a sense of ownership in what they did. It was theirs.

> In terms of ... decorum or dignity or pride or, a certain sense of being able to do what you said it is you are going to do, being outside of yourself and doing something, I seem to feel that about it too. They came there to do something, and they did that, and not just in terms of this is me doing this, but they did do what they said they were going to do clearly in terms of the objective, but it was a certain, beyondness of that objective, a certain excess or, I used the word joy before and I mean that too, but not a self-conscious way of meeting the objective, but a happy in control kind of a way of meeting the objective. Like, they were not saying 'all right we're going to get this...' but 'we're going to get this and this is going to be fun' and it looked easy. They had a certain way of making things well, yeah, that's a good analogy there. ... People who do things have a way of making it look easy. ..It was a good time. ... It was fun for them. That was there too. ....But it had the feeling of knowing what you're doing and doing it freely.
>
> You know I think that shows that they owned it....Like, somehow or other you've managed to work with them and develop a theme that they owned as well as you did.

The Supervisor of Elementary Education (Mike) May 14

Initial Reaction

Mike's initial reaction was positive.

> Okay, I think the presentation was just phenomenal. I was very impressed. And I think most people.... everybody there was impressed. It was something quite different and very exciting to see.

Personal Impact

I felt that the personal impact the celebration had on Mike was related to background experiences. His major responsibility this year was to assist teachers in classrooms of combined grades in dealing with their extensive curricula. Integrating subject areas was one way that was being attempted in order to assist with this problem of fitting everything in. Mike saw this celebration as an excellent example of the integration of two disciplines. Mike also has a movement training background and I think this is apparent as he focuses on the movement aspect more than the others. He has also several years as a school principal. As a result of his varied background he raised many important questions.

> Well, okay first of all from the point of view of taking two disciplines, like religion and phys-ed and work them together, I think that was the crux of the whole thing. ...To first realize that it can be done and show that it can be done and implement it and actually do it, I think is excellent. They seemed very compatible....Well, I think from a student's point of view, or a young child's point of view, elementary student's, what they do has to be fairly meaningful, and I think if we try to isolate their activities too much, then they don't have as much meaning. I've seen elementary students find a religious celebration boring. And I've seen those students find a movement lesson boring, as it were, and yet I think this could be an in to get them both fairly exciting and perhaps more meaningful for them.

Affective Response

Although Mike said that he was emotionally touched by the celebration he did not elaborate on this. He exhibited a much more practical point of view. The following statement was the only one Mike made that had anything to do with feelings.

> Okay, well, I had goose bumps. You know, I was very touched.

Aesthetic Dimension

Mike did not discuss the aesthetic dimension as such, other then to note that the symbolism was excellent and he thought there was a strong visual impact on the young children which is discussed in the next part.

Meaning for Children

The meaning for the children dancing as far as Mike was concerned dealt with the fact that they could move as opposed to sitting and listening.

> Well, for one thing the elementary kids want to move. You know, I've observed them during a celebration where they might have been expected to stay put, for example, what might be called protocol (nice and quiet and sit and be quiet and so on) so that in itself I think offers them an escape to that expectation. They by nature are active, they want to move and I think this gives them an opportunity to express their feelings through movement.

Mike discussed the role of the spectators or observers at great length. He wondered if they were tuned in to the celebration or overwhelmed by the visual.

> .... I think just by observing their attentiveness said something. Okay, now I suppose you could probably question because it being a new experience, whether they were. You know, which was more fascinating to them, the celebration aspect or the dance. I suppose you can't really isolate the two either, because they were in fact one.

Mike raised the same concern as Doreen and I had regarding the role of the chidren as spectators. Were the observers in fact involved in the celebration? The following conversation exemplifies this.

> Mike: ... they weren't actively involved in the celebration. They are strictly observers, I suppose, but I suspect that they were you know, looking at everything. They were looking at the flowers, they were looking at the camera, they were looking at the walls, the posters and I suspect that the children that were doing their thing on the microphone were probably least paid attention to and I don't, you know I'm not criticizing the actual performance, I'm just saying that I think that would have an effect on the actual benefit to the students that were watching.
>
> Karen: Yeah, so what you're saying is it was overwhelming. Like, there was a lot of things there...
>
> Mike: I think in their first experience for them, it was. But I wouldn't want to risk removing those things because I think then it would certainly take away from the actual activity. But I think that part of it can be skirted by a little bit of preparation for the students....If I were to answer that or comment on what I thought a celebration was, what had taken place with your activity was there was in fact a group of students celebrating. The rest were observers. Like, they weren't part of the celebration.

Later on in our discussion when I was explaining why I had some children in to watch we again discussed this idea.

> Karen: I find that age level works harder if they are being watched. I think. I find audience does something to them....That's why I decided we should have more physically inactive participants. I don't like to call them observers.
>
> Mike: Did that part of it cross your mind as a concern, perhaps? That I suppose the distinction I was trying to make before is in fact this point that you just struck on. Are they observers or are they inactive participants? The other people. The other kids. The other observers including ourselves. The adults that were there. Okay, traditionally at a celebration you are passed out a sheet with music on it. You know, the songs on it. Now, I'm not going to comment whether that's good or bad or whatever, but just as a comparison. Okay, now some people would look at that and say 'Gee, I was a participant. Because I sang the songs with the students'. Now, I don't know if that should be a concern, but it could be a criticism by someone I suppose. They say 'Okay, well gee, all you have are observers. You don't have participants'. I think even just by being there and observing they are participating because they are emotionally involved there. You know, they have certain reactions. The ooh's and aah's and 'Gee that was nice' 'that was good'. You know, I think they are still involved. I don't know, I'm not sure. I think I probably commented on that part already myself.

Mike's comments regarding the spectator versus participant provided me with the opportunity to really reflect on this issue as both Doreen and I were concerned that the celebration not become a "show". I believe, however, that the impact on the "audience" was strong enough that they were "called to celebrate" which of course was the intention.

Conclusions

In conclusion I would venture to say that the impact of the celebration on these adults was strong. Each one, however, brought their own experience to the situation and interpreted accordingly. Some of the main themes they brought forward were the sense of belonging, ownership, accomplishment, and involvement by the children. These will be discussed in chapter six.

Part Four - Dancer's Responses

This part will deal with the aspects that seemed to be important to the children based on the things they talked about. I was unable to categorize the responses for the children in a similar way as for the adults because they talked about the celebration in a different way. The responses are divided into two aspects. The first deals with the feelings the children had about the celebration for themselves. The second aspect is their perspective of the celebration for other people.

Aspect one - Personal Impact

There were two areas that came through as being important to the children. One was the doing and the other was the reaction of others to the doing. By doing, I mean the mechanics of the movement apart from the meaning. For the children there was not a great deal of thought about the meaning but rather a concern for the doing. The reaction of others was of great concern. What do they think of me? Was it all right? This was evidenced by the remarks about successes and mistakes made.

Feelings of Physical Satisfaction

The children found the dance satisfying in itself without any concern for abstract ideas. They enjoyed the feeling and the novelty as evidenced by the following comments.

> -I liked all the parts cause they were fun and I enjoyed it.
>
> -Well, I like the dances I liked because we've never done this before and I thought it was something new and I just liked it. I wanted to do it over again and all that.
>
> - Like it just feels so good.
>
> - And when somebody dances or something you get the feeling inside you. You get the beat. Yeah the beat inside you.
>
> - It's fun to do.
>
> - It's enjoying. It's something new.
>
> - It's something you can participate in and you can have fun and you can enjoy it while you can.
>
> - It's everything put together. Like, singing. Dancing is the movement.

Feelings of Accomplishment

For many of the children the feeling of a job well done and acknowledged by others was important.

- I liked doing it the second time, too... Cause I like showing people what I can do. (May 14)

- I liked the celebration because it was well, like, the second time, I liked it because I goofed up the first...screwed up. And because it was fun and showed people that if you work on it hard enough you can do it. (May 14)

The acknowledgement from the others teachers in the school gave the children a real feeling of pride in what they did. The following conversation deals with this aspect.

Karen: How did you feel after you'd done it for them though?

Child: Pretty good.

Karen: Did other teachers say anything to you about it after?

Child: Yeah, they said it was really nice.

Child: Mrs. Z came in and Mrs. M. and Mrs P. came in.

Karen: Came in where?

Child: To our classroom. They said that it was really nice. If anything like that ever happens again, we should...

Child: Mr. A. taught us listening skills and he came in and just before he left he said it was a really nice dance.

Karen: So how did you feel abuot that?

Child: Proud.

Child: Well I felt really good.

Karen: Did you feel like you'd done a good job? You worked hard and it paid off.

Child: I was proud of what I did. All that time paid off.

Karen: John?

Child: I felt proud too. (May 16)

Self Awareness

A major concern for these children was the way they perceived that other people saw them. The spectators for the children fell into two categories: the adults and their peers. Their peers presented the most threat to them and their self esteem. In the interviews after the celebration they talked at great length about the difficulty of performing in front of the other grade six class.

> -Yeah, because mostly the Grade sixes make fun of us for what we do. Like they call Grade sixes (in the split grade five and six) names and make fun of them because they are with the grade fives.
>
> -Yeah, they'll go "well you guys all spend your time on that instead of work and so we are going to do the same thing as you guy". And they dance around us and they show off to us.
>
> -Yeah and they call us a bunch of dummies.
>
> -Cause the other classes....the Grade six....they make fun of us.
>
> -They tease you.
>
> -Yeah, they call us babies and stuff.
>
> -But when it was finished....when the show was finished they went out the door saying 'ooh what a rotten show and you're babies and ..(May 11).

> -Like, I didn't like, um when we did it in front of the whole school because the Grade sixers were there. The other Grade sixes.
>
> -We thought they would make fun of us.
>
> -Yeah cause most of them tease us and that. (May 14)
>
> -Well, the first time I didn't feel embarrassed because there wasn't much people, but uh, doing it for the whole school, I felt kinda shy....because there was grade sixes there and I thought that they would make fun of us.
>
> -They said "Oh, this is a baby show." (May 14)

A few of the children did not feel this way about the grade sixes and enjoyed sharing with the whole school.

> -I was nervous before the second time because I thought that the rest of the ...like, the grade sixes and the grade fives would have teased us. But, after we started it was really fun. After we started the celebration in front of the rest of the school, it was really fun.

Some of the children were unaware of any negative feedback from the grade sixes as seen from the following conversation.

> Child: Well, the grade sixes, they really didn't call us names. Everybody told me that it was pretty good.
>
> Karen: The grade sixes told you they like it?
>
> Child: Yeah.
>
> Child: A couple of the popular girls did.
>
> Karen: Oh, because I'm hearing different things about what the grade sixes said. Did you hear anything from the grade sixes John?
>
> John: No, they complimented me.

Feelings of Discomfort or Embarrassment

Some of the children were self conscious at first while others felt very relaxed.

> -Well, the second time we did it I felt very embarrassed because I know people were like watching me moving all over the place, moving around and dancing and I felt sort of embarrassed. (May 10).
>
> -When you said 'Melanie do it over again, I felt so embarrassed....I thought 'oh my god' and I was so embarrassed I had my head down while I was walking there.
>
> -Embarrassed and proud.
>
> -I felt mad at them....the grade sixes.
>
> -I felt sort of shaky.
>
> -I felt relaxed after it. (May 14)
>
> -Uncomfortable at first, when we were standing on my knees. I had bruises all over my knees.
>
> -Well, I felt ....I agree with Tracy that they were relaxing.
>
> -I liked when you crouch down for 'One Little Candle'. It seemed like, like it seemed so warm. And it just seemed different. I don't know why.
>
> -You're just crouching. And you're like this, and it feels so nice. (May 14)
>
> -I thought it was fun to do in front of everybody and be videotaped. I thought it was fun. (May 16)
>
> -Well, first it was kinda scary....I was relieved (when it was over). (May 16)

Feelings of Concern Over Mistakes

There was an almost obsessive concern over making mistakes. This I think is very tied up with their concern over what other people think about them, their feelings of self esteem. They seemed to know every "mistake" they made and perceived mistakes that no one else knew about.

> -Me and Ella just went and Cynthia just went and she didn't have the beat of the music and then John and Bobby they didn't know what to do. They thought well right after Cynthia we go. So they went and I go "oh, no". (May 10)
>
> -I hit Tracy on the head. Cause I was focusing down here and she was in the dark and I went like this ... and I hit her in the head.
>
> -Like Lisa. I was just walking along looking at my light. I was just walking and looking up with my eyes open and I came and I hit Lisa and almost fell over her and I went "ahhhhh" and then she put her arms out and pushed me up and then she came up and we separated.
>
> -....and then I started singing real loud and I only heard myself and I thought "oh, no, I'm the only one singing."
>
> -Like, the getting ready I didn't think...while we were getting ready I didn't think it would be good as it ended up cuz it ended up really good. And I thought it would be a lot longer than just 10 minutes or 20 minutes. And it was fun. (May 11).
>
> -Well, I thought we would all goof up in front of everybody. (May 11)
>
> -I felt embarrassed ....in case I messed up the whole thing.
>
> -Some of it I wasn't so jazzy about. Like, just walking when you're lining up by the candles, you're like, my light started blinking and it nearly went off on me. And that's pretty humiliating. (May 14)
>
> -I was a little nervoous seeing my parents and wondering 'how does the dance go' getting all mixed up and running away when the 1's are supposed to run away. (May 16)

Aspect Two - Effect on the Audience

The effect the children perceived themselves as having on the audience was probably the reason that they felt good about their celebration. They discussed the message they felt the audience got from them in the following ways.

> Child: Cause ....the grade twos understood it cause they were part of it. And they knew how...and everybody...we all felt really good about it. (May 10)
>
> Child: Well, like, everybody said they were really moved by it. So...
>
> Karen: What does that mean do you suppose?
>
> Child: Well, when you see something like 'Ghandi' or something like that. Like something really good, like E.T. or something like that. You know, something with a real good ending and uh...well, you leave and it gives you...there's an excellent feeling cause you're happy that the little green guy lives.
>
> Child: Well, the people really liked it and they understand it better than just talking cause after awhile you just start daydreaming cause it gets boring and then...but when you watch the people do the actions and everybody...so then you don't start daydreaming because when you just keep hearing the priest talk you just get bored. (May 11)

Some of the children felt that the small children would not understand their celebration with the exception of the grade twos who understood it because they took part.

> -I think that uh, like, the readings I think they were kinda not very simple written, like I think they were kinda very hard for the little kids to understand.
>
> -I think they enjoyed it, but I don't think they knew what it meant.
>
> -Everybody said they liked the last part. I think they got the message at the last part cause it was dark and they could just see the candles.

> -I think that was the part they could understand ...because, it was dark and the music was saying along with it and they got the picture of candle light and another candle and there was a person lighting another person's candle. (May 14)
>
> -My sister, she's in grade three and she said that she thought it was good. And I asked her if she knew what it meant and she said that she did. She said "you guys were trying to show people the different way of rejoicing." (May 14)

Through discussions about the possibility of doing their celebration again or other celebrations like it, I was able to get at their ideas of the impact that they had on the audience and what they thought about the meaning of dance in celebration.

> -I think everybody would like it because it sounds...like, it's like a God.
>
> -Like, dancing is like praying because it tells everything...
>
> -It's different.
>
> -Like praying up and down like your praying. And around.
>
> -and then in church when you go, like, if you want, if you've really got the spirit, and then you're just singing, like Alleluia and praise the Lord, eh like you're just singing there and you get carried away. (by dancing)
>
> -And praying and everything like, they get bored cause you do it over and over again, but this would be new to them. They would think it was really nice.
>
> -Well, it makes people like, it makes it more excitement in church.
>
> -It's more fun than just sitting there for about two hours. The priest is standing there talking to the adults and you don't even understand anything and it's more like you can understand this and it's really good instead of just sitting there doing

nothing cause you don't understand.

-Everybody waves with their hands and they just...and when the singing starts to stop and then when he keeps on singing we just feel like dancing so you can just get out in the hallways and just dance. It just feels really neat cause you're like, 'Praise the Lord', you're free. Like, in church you're free to get to do things rather than just sit there and listen. (May 10)

-Well, it was fun for them to do it and uh...in a way things are more fun to do like people will get the meaning of it and like, they'll be happy about it and do more like, they are going to understand about it. (May 11)

-It won't be as complicated as like, telling them. As telling them the words. Like, uh, all this complicated stuff you know.

-And like, you can tell if it's a religious song or something like that. And like that 'Chariots of Fire', it wasn't a religious song, but you could tell by the actions we were making a message. (May 11)

-Well, cause like, usually you express things with words instead of dancing or something like that. And, well, it's funner when you use dancing movements. It's like you know you are participating in the words and that. (May 14)

-I think, it was just uh, so clear what you were doing. Like, it's just like writing down something.

-Well, when you got your hands up you can tell that you're sorta praying to God in a way.

-I think the people, like, they would have understood us because like, we've never done that dance before, those kind of dances before, and they can understand it...and, if we watched ourselves we would probably understand it too. (May 14).

-Well, I think it will help the celebration cause like, most people don't probably like, when their priest is talking most people doze off. Like that. And they don't ...cause they get bored of some reason. And like, if there was dancing, they would watch because like, there's some action and stuff like that.

> -Because it would liven church up. Because some people never listen to church at all.
>
> -They just go and then they think they're doing a good deed without listening. And if they listened and watched that, it would make they'd learn alot that they didn't listen about. (May 14)
>
> -I think that we should (dance in church). Because then it kind of like, usually adults go to church and then they can understand those movements better than little kids I think.
>
> -Well, some kids if they say it's (church) really boring. Cause they just talk about things they don't understand. And then if they went there, they would think there's really a message in it. They would think it was fun. If there was dancing and everything. (May 14)

Stuart thought that perhaps we could have some influence on the world. Witness the following discussion.

> Stuart: Yeah, but also when everybody in the church takes part. You know, there are some men in there that are like, they're big cowboys you know, and all that stuff and they don't want to be caught dancing like that stuff. So. Well, you know.
>
> Karen: There are men dancers you know.
>
> Stuart: Yeah, well, I know. There's a lot of them, but I said some.
>
> Karen: Yeah, you're right, though some people don't...and it's not just men. Tanya doesn't want to dance either. It's not just big men who think they're cowboys.
>
> Stuart: Yeah, but we should have a church ceremony or we should get a church to see our dance and maybe it will influence or something.

Some of the other children had a similar idea. They were going to influence the parents which would have an effect on the children or vice versa.

Child: There's really a message in it and everything. For the parents.

Child: And if the little kids wanna dance...

Child: Well, the little kids. They all goof off. They just think it's boring so people just think it's boring going to church, all this talk. But if they go one time and they see all this. Then they'll think every day it's going to happen and they'll learn more about God.

Child: Yeah, they'll get more interested and then put their kids into it. Like, uh, they have a children's choir at our church and my mom thought that that was nice and she wanted me to go to it. So. If parents like it, they would probably want their kids to go in it.

Child: I think we should to that once. I think we should go to church and do that. Like, to one of their songs that they usually sing. (May 14)

Thoughts While Dancing

The things the children were thinking about while they were dancing seem to support what Best (1974) says about expression in dance. The expression is in the movement itself not necessarily in the dancer's mind at the time of the performance. This was true for these children. They were concentrating on not making mistakes and putting all their effort and energy into "doing it right".

-Well, for me, I don't know about everybody else, but for me if I'm going to do it right and make a smart move. Like, know what I'm doing. If I can remember what I'm doing and not make a mistake.

-I was just trying to remember that's all.

-I just listen to the music and when we have to start ~~like~~ like spread your hands...like, I don't really think

> about praying, I just think if I'm going to do it right or if I'm going to goof up or anything. (May 11)
>
> -Uh, don't make a mistake.
>
> -What I was doing.
>
> -Yeah, trying to remember what I was supposed to do.
>
> -I was just trying to follow the music.
>
> -I was just looking at other people so I wouldn't mess it all up.
>
> -I was concentrating on doing it. (May 14)
>
> -Well, when I was doing it in front of people, I think you concentrate more on what I was doing, like, not on straight what I was doing, but maybe kinda understand better all the movements and stuff like that. Like, going up I really put all...everything into it when I was doing it in front of everybody. (May 14)

Some of the children indicated that they thought about what they were doing after the celebration was over.

> -Well, at the time when you are doing the actions, you don't really think about it, but afterwards it starts to get to you, like you know, it makes you want to learn more about God.
>
> -I don't think about that...but later I do, say, after the dance when everybody compliments you and that stuff. (May 11)

Special Cases

I am writing separately about two of the children because their involvement was slightly different than the other children. Bobby and Eddie were given the option of not taking part in the celebration due to their disruptive behaviour. They both decided to opt out of the celebration. Bobby ended up asking to rejoin us but Eddie kept to his original decision. I interviewed these children individually after the celebration.

Bobby

Bobby decided to rejoin us because his mother indicated that if he did not he would get into trouble with the principal. He said that the reason he didn't enjoy what we were doing was because the other grade sixes were always teasing them. He thought that what we were doing was babyish. After the celebration was over he thought it was all right and he would be in it again. He was, however, very annoyed with his perceived attitude of the grade sixes. I was not convinced that Bobby was being honest and telling me how he really felt. It seemed easier for him to discuss the grade six class. I discussed Bobby with Al later and Al felt Bobby was doing what Bobby always does and that is, never taking any responsibility for his own actions. He always excuses his behaviour by blaming someone else. Personally, I felt that Bobby was very lacking in self confidence.

Eddie

The interview with Eddie was very difficult for both Eddie and myself. I could tell he was in an emotional state by his nervous hands and teary eyes. I tried to make him relax and assure him that this was not a threatening situation and I was very interested in his feelings. I think that Eddie was very unhappy about his decision to opt out of the celebration and it was painful for him to talk about it. He was unable to give me reasons for deciding to quit. It just seemed like a good thing to do at the time. His main reason for being sorry for not being in the celebration was that he felt very left out. "I didn't want to be left out....I don't know, everybody else was in it and I wasn't". When asked what he thought the other children thought about the celebration, he felt the other grade 6 class didn't like it, but that the teachers all thought it was very nice. If we were to do another celebration Eddie would want to be in it if his friends were. I asked Eddie why he didn't come back into the celebration as Bobby had and he said he felt it wouldn't be right but was unable to elaborate on this.

Conclusions

The dancer's experience as seen by the children themselves was very positive both for them and in their view, for the spectators. They felt a deep commitment to the work and had the feeling that it was their own. The mixing of the learning modes (seeing, hearing, moving) were referred to over and over again and gave the experience its strength. The positive feedback from the adults was a powerful motivator in their satisfaction about their performance. These conclusions will be dealt with in more detail in chapter six.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The findings of this study will be discussed under the following major headings that emerged as a result of this work: The Journey, Affirmation of Self, The Creative Dance Form, Response from the Spectators, Dance in Religious Celebration, The Research Method, The Paradox, and Beginnings.

The Journey

The children in this study experienced transition from the concrete to the spiritual in their journey of symbolic growth. As Jamison (1975) states "we begin with the senses, with objects, and then proceed to mysteries" (p.4). The children began their symbolic journey with concrete objects. The objects used were both simple and everyday as well as being potentially spiritual symbols. The flowers represented the peace and beauty of God's world and were used in a dance that symbolized a celebration of all things beautiful in creation. These flowers, part of the children's concrete world allowed them to make connections at their own level of understanding. Some would find the color their bridge to the world's beauty; for others the shape and design would strike a memory of real flowers, and for some the connection or the bridge would be more towards the spiritual, as yet a mystery to them yet paradoxically a known. The flowers therefore provided on the continuum from the concrete to the spiritual a place for each individual child to understand celebration. The lights, although both fun to use and pretty to look at, provided a strong connection with the spiritual idea of the importance of spreading good throughout the world. Children knew the dark, have perhaps experienced it as something threatening or been delighted and secure in its blackness. Fascinated since very young children with candles and matches, fireworks, and stars, they brought to the dance their own understandings and experience of darkness and light. They also brought that need to explore the dark in a secure atmosphere, an exploration in part of the unknown and the unknowable. So the lights, though simple and concrete, being held and moved, became alive. These were lights, not held static or affixed to something, but lights that the child controlled changing them in the dark space. The children quite naturally were being led towards a deeper understanding of the meaning of light and celebration. The movement itself became a symbolic language by encompassing the gestures of turning and openness. In the dance 'Simple Gifts' the children were asked to reach out, touch, meet, follow and lead.

These are all spiritual ideas that represent the Christian purpose. The banners used in the celebration were also an important representaton of symbolic ideas. They allowed the children to assimilate what they had learned through the preparation of the dances as they were required to take these ideas and put them in another form. The fact that they were able to do this confirmed for the researcher that they understood what they were trying to communicate in THEIR celebration. The written narrations by the children represented verbally what the children wanted to say in their celebration. Again the children confirmed for the researcher their understanding of what they were attempting to do in the celebration. Music enfolded the entire celebration and helped to create a special mood and feeling right from the beginning. As stated by Larose (1981) the non-verbal elements must be heightened in celebrations for children. This was reaffirmed by the children themselves in the preliminary interviews. The symbols used in this celebration became powerful tools in assisting the children's understanding of the celebration. As stated by Father Charlie "you have to work with children at a level which they will understand" (May 8). Children had the language to talk about the concrete.

> Justin: I liked it when all of the children were going around in circles.

Anish: I like the part with the flowers.

Chris: It was neat how the lights floated in the darkness.

They do not have the language to talk about the spiritual symbolism in anywhere near the same degree although a few children are starting to make the transition.

> -Well, when you got your hands up you can tell that you're sorta praying to God in a way. (grade six)
>
> -I think that the message was spread the word of God. (grade three)

This journey from the concrete to the spiritual evolved as the study took on its own dynamics. This helps us to reflect upon the care with which the concrete should be planned into children's celebration.

Affirmation of Self

The religious experience parallels the life experience. It is an experience about life and deals with the wholeness of life. The significance of the celebration for the dancers was strongly connected to their life experience. The entire experience was filled with ambiguous and changing feelings. Feelings of satisfaction, feelings of inadequacy, feelings of discomfort and embarrassment, feelings of accomplishment and pride, and feelings of power were all involved in varying degrees with different children. The positive feelings somehow won out and overcame pressure from peers making the experience satisfactory for them. As written in the document from the American Council For the Arts in Education (1977) panel member Howard asserts that

> By age ten or eleven, many children worry about what their peers think, and have less confidence in their ability to make things look "real," to move freely without embarrassment, to play an instrument or sing without fear of a sour note. They are temporarily lost to the arts unless rescued by quality programs. Such children seek other outlets; their drawings become stiff and cliche-ridden, and they become more rigid in presenting themselves publicly, at least in the context of school. The technical demands of music may discourage many; some enter an "awkward" stage and discontinue dance or drama because of an uncertain self-image. It is then that a good arts program is of special importance to children because it can help them to master different skills and to construct a more solid identity" (p.59).

The children in this study were certainly entering into this age of extreme self consciousness and this celebration provided them with an opportunity for personal growth. This affirmation was brought about by the involvement of the several people who were significant to these children. First of all, the work they were doing in the preparation of this celebration was constantly reinforced by the researcher and the cooperating teacher. There was a gradual development of the feeling that they were doing something valuable and worthwhile. The work with the grade twos who looked up to and responded to them also became an affirmation of who they were. Their interaction with the grade twos allowed them to respond to the child within themselves and dance and play in a risk free environment as they "showed" the smaller children how it was to be done. They were able to drop the grade six role that says this is "baby stuff" and just enjoy the experience. This open adoration from the younger children contributed to their feelings of being somebody as evidenced by comments in their journals.

> Michael: Yes I did enjoy them because they wouldn't laugh or make fun. They would just enjoy it.
>
> Tracy: I had lots of fun with the twoer's. The one I had was easy to teach. And she always followed me like a little puppy dog even at the end.

The children were further affirmed by their parents who took the time to come and celebrate with them and respond enthusiastically after it was over. One of the parents told me that his son had started to talk about it a few days prior to the celebration and he got the feeling that it was important for him to be there. It was an important enough occasion to warrant a party complete with food and that special cake made by 'Aunty B' with the theme of their celebration written on it. This affirmation continues in the form of other teachers who take the time to stop them in the halls and even come to their classroom to tell them what a beautiful celebration it was and how moved they were by it. The teachers comments were especially important because these children had the feeling that they were not liked. "Because sometimes our class isn't one of the greatest classes in the school and then when we do something good like that, it kind of says 'this class can do something good sometimes' (May 14). The affirmation continued with the principal (a very important adult in the school) who is so impressed he asks them to do their celebration again so that all the children and teachers in the school will be able to see it. Now the children are celebrities in their own school! This affirmation is direct to the children but it is the children who have to integrate the experiences and make them part of their emotional growth. This became a real conflict for some of the children when they had to deal with the reaction of their peers (i.e. the other grade six class) who they perceived as being derogatory in their remarks about the celebration. They had to come to terms with the relative importance of the positive affirmation versus this negative feedback some of them were perceiving. The positive won out and the children explained away the feelings of this other class by accusing them of jealousy.

This brings me to some important questions about the wisdom of exposing children to an audience. What type of audience should it be? How much experience have the children had in terms of audience? Their first exposure should be in a safe secure environment with success guaranteed. This means taking a close look at how much understanding the audience has in terms of what is happening. This brings me back to Father Charlie's comments about being prepared to see dance in celebration and understanding its purpose there. The reaction of some of the other grade six class could very well have been destructive to the dancers but luckily the positive affirmation outweighed the negative.

At the time of the celebration the meaning and purpose was not of prime importance. The major thought in the children's minds was to do a good job. The importance of the experience was brought home to them through the affirmation by others. Through this affirmation they began to integrate the activity through discussion and reflection. This provided a further step in their spiritual growth.

As Larose (1981) stated in his writings on liturgy with children, their emotional needs must be met in order to maximize their involvement. Through this celebration the children's emotional need for "Approval, Attention, and Affection" were met. The children owned this celebration, a feeling that was built up over time through their total involvement in the creative process. They understood through this process that it was a collective creation with their ideas and input being encouraged and accepted all the way through.

An important point to make here is that the adults (parents and educators) in this group also affirmed the cooperating teacher and the researcher. They told us that dance in celebration was acceptable and created for them a very positive experience. The question as to whether dance in celebration was acceptable was a major concern in this research.

> In a nonthreatening atmosphere where there is warmth and acceptance and someone to receive what we have to give, creativity begins to flow (O'Connor, 1971, p.22).

The Creative Dance Form

As stated in the supporting literature the creative dance form allows children the openness to express and communicate their ideas. Carolyn supported this when she talked about the fact that these children were not performing for excellence but rather to convey ideas and communicate these to an audience. Bruce (1966) in discussing creative dance and religious education states

> All creative arts have within them something of the divine, and dance more than any other has the power of immediate communication. It is an art which the most awkward and clumsy, the least gifted and the most graceless can take up and make their own. Some brightening of beauty and of grace is bound to come, and within it will be at least a little of the spiritual" (p.5).

Many of the children I worked with could be described as graceless and awkward, yet they had the power to move in an emotional way a large group of people. I maintain that the creative dance form provided a framework that allowed children of all abilities to respond through movement in a way that they were each successful. This was also pointed out by Carolyn as she noticed the varying level of ability among the dancers.

> And another thing that you cannot say that it was, was excellenace of performance. Because you were taking ordinary kids, out of an ordinary classroom, who basically lacked dancing skills. So, you can't say it's because their performance was so excellent that they took your breath away.......They were not saying 'look how perfect I am'. They were saying something else.

Bruce also makes the point that in teaching movement to children it is important not to give too little or too much guidance. The creative dance form again because of its openess allows for as much or as little guidance as is necessary. The children I worked with needed a lot of guidance at the beginning of the project. Later on they began to rely more and more on their own feelings and ideas.

The student brings the whole self to the dance experience. What the children bring to the experience can change the situation. Because of the diversity in child experiences a varied approach works best in reaching more individuals. Hawkins (1965) feels that "getting the student to think about and feel the new concept (the movement pattern or the choreographic principles) is probably one of the greatest challenges of teaching" (p.140). The "open scaffold" (Boorman 1982) inherent in the creative dance form allowed for the building of ideas dealing with the symbolic and sensory as the children came to a better understanding of spiritual symbolism in celebration.

Response from the Spectators

The spectator involvement in the celebration appeared to depend on the investment in or distance from the experience. The researcher and cooperating teacher were closely and emotionally involved. They had an investment in time and energy spent and were anxious for this to be a positive experience. They also had developed a close relationship with the children and were with them doing every step of their dances. When the children succeeded they were proud of them and shared their exuberant joy.

The principal, as the one responsible for Christian leadership in a catholic school as well as the overall education of the children, took a very global look at the celebration from a variety of perspectives. The resarcher felt that Al observed a total experience for the children. He saw the involvement and commitment of the dancers as heartwarming. He also knew these children well and felt pride in their efforts and accomplishment. Al also observed the emotions in the celebration and felt that we need more feeling in celebration because so much of life is based on feeling and "religion is a way of life" (May 25).

The religious education consultant had a vested interest in this celebration in that a major part of her job is to assist teachers in developing celebration for children. This was her first experience with dance in celebration and her reaction was very emotional. For her the celebration demanded a response.

> ....this one did actually move you to the point of having goose bumps or a sense of awe or a sense of ....well, being involved. There's no doubt about it. Of being a part of it. Of being called out of yourself for a minute. Of being called into the celebration (May 22).

Carolyn in her role as religious education consultant has attended many celebrations where misbehaviour has resulted in anger on the part of teachers, principals and children. This was so strong that Carolyn used the word "anger" five times in one paragraph. She felt the involvement of the children and the strong visual impact for the spectators held the attention and negative feelings were thus avoided.

The other teachers in the school had an interest in this celebration too as they knew these children well. They had taught these children in previous years and were pleased to see this intense involvement coming from them. They also had a strong emotional response to the celebration. The teachers all viewed the celebration from a practical point of view. They observed how meaningful it was for their children who were watching it and were interested in ways to incorporate this idea into their future celebrations.

Another spectator who was from outside of the school was the physical education consultant. This was his first year in this position. He had just completed a year as a combined grades consultant where his task was to assist teachers who were teaching more than one grade. One of the ideas he had worked a great deal with was the integration of subject areas to facilitate the learning in these combined grades. Consequently his observations were related to this integrative aspect. He felt that the two areas of religion and movement were very complimentary and worked well together. His ideas coincided with Martin (1979) who feels that dance has potential as a basic educator.

Another group of very important spectators of course were the children in the other classes. They exhibited a very strong response to the visual, in particular the flowers and the flashlights. This goes back to the previous discussion of the power of the concrete symbolic language in helping children to come to an understanding of abstract ideas. As one grade three child put it. "I think the message was one person spreaded the word of God to the rest" (May 9).

Two areas came up as important from the point of view of all the spectators. One was the involvement of the grade twos and the other was the strong visual impact of the celebration. The involvement of the grade twos seemed to indicate the feeling of reaching out and sharing that is important to Christian community. The strong visual representation in the celebration allowed the spectators the freedom to be the creators, to write their own story. This was especially apparent with the principal who was able to create his own words, feelings, images and ideas. For Carolyn it was a visual experience that "took your breath away" (May 22).

> The act of creation is always a solitary one. Others can encourage us to create. They cannot create for us (O'Connor, 1971, p.23).

Dance in Religious Celebration

A major conclusion regarding this study is that, in this instance, dance as a tool of teaching and learning in the context of celebration was very powerful. The religion consultant saw it as a "major breakthrough in celebration" that has not even been looked at. The language of dance has been said to be universal and to be understood by children and adults at all levels of development. Although such claims are open to challenge young children in this study related to dance in a way that was meaningful for them. It was physical, it was visual. Secondly children participating in dance were enabled to learn a great deal about themselves and others. They experienced ideas through dance that could be explored in no other way. Thirdly, dance added a dimension to the children's life that may be very meaningful later on. Without dance a way of knowing, and feeling about the world could have been lost to them. Carolyn observed this language of dance while watching the older children dance with the younger children.

> When the little ones came forward and inter-mingled with the big ones, like that visually said something so important.....There's a certain okayness about being together. A certain playfulness....he really felt whoever it was who reached out and touched him and swung around the circle with him, and so he would know in a deeper way what it means to be with people. To be touched by people. To be a part of a community (May 22).

As expressed by Martin (1965), Engel (1978), and Eisner (1980) the arts allow us to experience knowledge and utilize symbols which add another dimension to our understanding of life experience. Hawkins (1965) stated that

> .... as a work of art, dance has an inherent communicative power. This is so because human movement, the material of dance is the essence of life. It grows out of life, reflects life, and is life. Therefore it is not surprising that movement is readily perceived and understood (p.4).

As Carolyn found, the children in this study were expressing exactly what they set out to express and it was clearly understood.

The literature on religious celebration supported the idea that celebrations for children should be concrete and multidimensional. This theory was well supported by the children themselves in this research as they talked about the flashlights, flowers, and actions.

Padavano (1979) also discusses the closeness of religious experience with aesthetic experience in that they both attempt to bring beauty into life. "Art becomes a religious experience when it seeks and affirms, communicates and celebrates, makes possible and indeed inescapable the experiences we are describing. Art and religion fail if they do not bring beauty into life" (p.5). The children in this study communicated and celebrated. They brought beauty into their own life and the lives of others. As Stuart so aptly describes the feeling, "You know, something with a real good ending and uh...well, you leave and it gives you...there's an excellent feeling" (May 10) and Edna in grade three thought "it was a nice celebration and the end of the prayer was so beautiful" (May 9). Pruyser (in Thompson 1979) suggests a similar idea when he says that when the human mind responds to an aesthetic experience (interpreting it as an experience of harmony and beauty) and couples this with a sense of the Beyond, then the aesthetic experience becomes also a religious experience (p.38). This is the sense in which Carolyn felt she was "called to appreciate and to enjoy" (May 22) and Joey in grade three enjoyed it because it was "a prayer and a dance" (May 9).

Pruyser (in Thompson 1979) also suggests that when art raises, consciously or subconsciously, such questions as "who am I?" "why am I here?" and "where am I going?" it is asking religious questions. As shown previously in the section on affirmation the children were asking these questions. As stated by Fowler (1977) dance provides an ideal means to attain self-awareness, self-development, and self-fulfillment (p. 4). In the words of children:

> -Well, it makes people like, it makes it more excitement in church.
>
> -Because it would liven church up.
>
> -Like, dancing is like praying because it tells everything...

In the simpler language of the children who danced in the celebration, dance makes celebration more interesting.

The Research Method

This research method had both strengths and weaknesses but the researcher felt it was the best way to assess the response to dance in celebration. It was difficult in the sense that the researcher became somewhat fractured trying to play the dual role of teacher and researcher. At times the teaching was not as good as it ought to have been because of the distraction of the research while at other times research was not as stringent as it should have been because teaching demands took over. Clark (1982) in her dual role as the member of a committee, as well as the researcher observing the committee at work, states that to be a complete participant is "extemely hard work, as the researcher must fulfill all of the obligations of a participant while in the field and those of an observer on his own time" (p.118). During meetings and other interactions Clark's role as researcher was subordinate to that of committee member. In this study the researcher became very much a teacher while in the classroom with the children. This method, however, allowed the researcher to gain insights that could not have been obtained any other way. The feelings of the people involved came across completely and the views of both children and adults were obtained and represented in their original form.

The fieldwork method of doing research is a time consuming one and places demands on the researcher as well as the participants in the study. Odynyk (1981) in her observations of classroom work refers to these demands as "ethnograhic fatigue" (p. 184) as she tried to keep up with the field notes from one observation period to another. During the period of this research there were times when the cooperating teacher felt overwhelmed with the enormity of the undertaking but felt when it was over that it had been worthwhile. It takes time to develop relationships with children and to involve them in something as sensitive as celebration one must take that time. This time also becomes very important in order to establish with the children the importance of honesty in research and working with them long enough so that a sense of trust is developed between the participants and the researcher.

The classroom _is_ a dynamic place. In this particular study, using an interdisciplinary approach, there were activities going on that were almost impossible to capture in words. How does one describe something in words that is represented in a nonverbal language? In order for symbolic systems to be understood they must be represented in their own language. Music must be played and dance must be danced. An attempt was made to gather some of this data through videotape, slides, and photographs. This is a technical problem and the researcher is not a technician. The video was taken by a professional but some of the slides and photographs were unsatisfactory due to improper equipment and lack of experience. You need powerful flash equipment in a gymnasium setting where lighting is a problem. The researcher feels however that when it came to looking at the whole when it was over the results were well represented through the words of the participants. The visual representation was a useful tool for the researcher to reflect upon, but the real meaning of the celebration was in the response of those involved. It was interesting to note that the principal after seeing the celebration said that he had no idea what he was going to see before the celebration and was apprehensive. He had seen bits of the work being developed and had overheard discussions about it but it was not until he had participated in the celebration that he began to understand the process. This again brings back the tremendous impact of the visual in this celebration.

A very important aspect of this type of research was the freedom it gave the researcher to use normal teaching techniques. The teaching was done in the normal setting which makes the results more realistic. Some teaching methods also served as data collecting techniques. The diaries served the purpose of communicating with the children as well as becoming valuable data. Group discussions are a natural teaching process to encourage dialogue among children. These group discussions after the celebration was over also became an important part of the data. According to Mahe (1984) "conducting an unstructured interview is not an easy task as the researcher has to refrain from imposing her definitions of the situation upon others" (P.279). It was found in this study that through the group discussion process with the children they carried the "interviews". They were enthusiastic and wanted to talk about what they had done and the researcher became mostly a listener. The children kept each other on topic.

The field notes kept throughout the project allowed the researcher to record the everyday happenings in a classroom and note all the things that challenge teachers everyday; the constraints of time and the energy required to deal with the social and emotional problems that are always ongoing. All of these dynamics add to the challenge of teaching and are a very real part of the everyday life of teachers. It was difficult to wade through this data and decide what was important. Other researchers have found this to be true. Mahe (1984) found the task of sorting data into categories a long and arduous one. Clark (1982) claimed to be "drowned in a sea of field notes where everything seemed to have potential research interest" (p. 483). Despite the difficulties associated with this kind of research the information it allowed the researcher to collect made it wothwhile.

> The kind of information that we are able to convey about what we have conceptualized is both constrained and made possible by the forms of representation that we have access to and are able to use (Eisner, 1981, p.50).

The Paradox

At this point the researcher asks herself the question "where do we go from here"? If this experience for children was as Carolyn suggested a "breakthrough" in celebration for children, then should it not be an integral part of religious education programs? The possibility for religious experience is inherent in celebration through its potential for expressing and sharing within community. Dance in this celebration added another dimension to the understanding of spiritual experience. If Catholic school systems cannot make celebration alive, exciting, and meaningful for children then "why celebrate"? Providing religious experience is fundamental to the existence of catholic schools. If they do not provide children with this experience then one might ask the question "why do these schools exist"?

The whole area of the development and implementation of good celebrations for children, with the incorporation of dance as one dimension, requires serious investigation.

Beginnings

The power of dance to strengthen religious celebration is one of breadth and depth. Dance provides children with another language for religious expression.

It gives them the potential for moving from the concrete to the abstract in spiritual symbolic growth. "Dance is praying three times" (Curtis, grade three, May 9). For us this was only a beginning.

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